Hafa Adai!

More parking and one-way streets coming to Garapan. PAGE 5
Homes in southern part of Saipan receive house numbers. PAGE 13

75¢

Saipan Tribune

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CHCC: 5,713 complete vaccinations

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

A total of 5,713 individuals have already received both doses of the COVID-19 vaccine, while 9,032 have so far had their first dose of the vaccine, according to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. public information officer Lee Tenorio.

With the CNMI population estimated at 55,000 people, this means that CHCC has already vaccinated over 10% of the islands' population.

See CHCC on Page 4

3 Saipan roads set for major upgrades

After months of planning, road construction will start this year to repair Beach Road, Chalan Kalabera in Talofofo, and Tun Herman Pan Road (Airport Road) in lower Dandan.

» Plans in place to repair Beach Road, Chalan Kalabera, and Airport Road

On Beach Road (Route 33), construction will start this year on the 2.06 miles between As Perdido Road in Chalan Piao to the Atkins Kroll intersection

See ROADS on Page 4

AT A GLANCE

As of 7pm, Feb. 18, 2021

GUAM	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	7,703	2	7,705
Recovered	7,523	5	7,528
Active	45	2	47
Deaths	130	0	130
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			122,982

SAIPAN	OLD	NEW	TOTAL
Positive	135	0	135
Traced via Travel Screening	109	0	109
Traced via Community Screening	26	0	26
Deaths	2	0	2
Cumulative Number of Persons Tested			26,131*
Days since last community transmission			183

VACCINATIONS IN THE CNMI

Saipan:	Tinian:	Rota:
Dose 1: 8,396	Dose 1: 273	Dose 1: 363
Dose 2: 5,585	Dose 2: 128	Dose 2:

*Total count includes the number of persons tested on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota. With guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, CHCC has opted not to report active and recovered cases.

Source: Joint Information Center - Guam, Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

COMMUNITY VULNERABILITY

LEGEND:
- **Red:** Least safe
- **Orange**
- **Yellow**
- **Blue**
- **Green:** Safest

Source: Office of the Governor

A line of cars that stretched all the way from the Imperial Pacific Saipan to Garapan Fishing Base were waiting to pre-register for the Office of Grants and Management's Saipan COVID-19 Food Relief Distribution.
NEIL FAMA

Long queue at pre-registration for food relief

A long line of cars stretched all the way from the Garapan Fishing Base to the front entrance of the Imperial Pacific Saipan casino yesterday for the pre-registration for the COVID-19 Food Relief Distribution that's being done by the Office of Grants and Management.

Although OGM announced the issuance of tickets will begin at 10am, people were already lining up as early as 7am.

OGM administrator Epi Cabrera said this was strictly for registering and the issuing of tickets to people in vehicles. Registration for walk-in applicants will be held today at the Governor's Office.

The official food distribu-

See LONG on Page 4

GCEA join forces with key govt agencies

The Governor's Council of Economic Advisers has reached out to government agencies that play roles in the success of the council's destination transformation initiatives and ease the process for business development and economic diversification, recovery, and sustainability.

The GCEA, led by co-chairs Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and Jerry Tan, met with government department heads this month and presented a summary of the projects the council and its partners have accomplished so far, along with a list of proposals that would help the CNMI go through the COVID-19 pandemic

See GCEA on Page 4

INSIDE

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Saipan Cares for Animals has made the difficult decision to move to a new location.
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OFF THE WALL
Texas residents are rescuing thousands of cold-stunned sea turtles.
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GOT A NEWS TIP? TEL: 235-6397 / 235-2440 FAX: 235-3740 EMAIL: editor@saipantribune.com

Local

OGM: 517 applications distributed

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The CNMI Office of Grants Management has so far handed out 517 applications for the COVID-19 Emergency Rental Assistance Program and has received 15 applications back as of Feb. 18.

According to a chart that OGM posted in its Facebook page, 160 applications were distributed on Feb. 16 and one was received and completed. The next day, on Feb. 17, 357 forms were distributed, and 14 were completed and received.

In an interview with OGM administrator Epiphanio Cabrera Jr., he said that once OGM receives all applications, they will do a pre-eligibility screening process for two weeks. This means that OGM will go through each application to see if the individual is eligible to receive rental assistance. The OGM will then conduct face-to-face interviews with those who are found eligible.

As of right now, the pre-eligibility process is only for residents who are U.S. citizens or qualified aliens. Cabrera said that they are awaiting clarifications whether the program also applies to CNMI-Only Transitional Workers. As of now, foreign workers (called CW workers) and Compact of Free Association (FSM, Palau, Marshall Islands) citizens, unless dual citizen, are not eligible.

Cabrera said that OGM is still looking at the guidance for those who are CW but have children who are a U.S. citizens who are 18 years or older, if they can apply.

Cabrera assures a smooth process for the funding.

The CNMI was awarded $10,400,669 for rental assistance and utility relief through the Emergency Rental Assistance Program under the recently enacted Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act.

Eligible households may receive up to 12 months of rental assistance plus an additional three months, depending on the household's circumstances.

Payments to existing household-related arrears as far back as March 13, 2020, will be prioritized before consideration of any future rent payments.

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Better Together

NMTI: We're in 'uncharted waters'

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

With no clear source of funding, an uncertain transition plan, and pulled in two directions by a board of trustees and board of directors, the Northern Marianas Trades Institute seems to be floundering as it goes into "uncharted waters."

NMTI board of trustees chair Mario Valentino said as much. "I think [where] we're right now [is] in uncharted waters," he said during a House Committee on Education hearing last Wednesday.

It didn't help that NMTI was closed in March 2020 because of the pandemic, right when NMTI was transitioning from an autonomous group with a board of directors into a government agency governed by a board of trustees. And then there was no unanimous stance whether to resume NMTI classes this year or not, with four board directors voting to resume and Valentino opposing it because there was no budget for it.

According to Valentino, at the previous board meeting with NMTI board of directors, plans for 2021 were in progress but there was no budget for a new module.

"With all due respect, why would we make decisions for 2021? I said please allow the trustees [to] make those decisions. I would rather see us finalize [the transition process] rather than continue trying to make plans," Valentino said at the committee hearing.

Last Oct. 5, 2020, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres line-vetoed the allocation of $600,000 and $800,000 in CNMI-Only Transitional Workers Fund to NMTI and the Northern Marianas College, respectively, for vocational educational curricula, apprenticeships, or other training program.

Valentino said that NMTI should not continue to run knowing that they are "on empty," even if they know they will have funds.

Also speaking at the committee meeting was NMTI board of directors chair John Gonzales, who said that there is CW funds but the money is "being held back." It is unclear why the Torres-Palacios administration is holding back the funding.

Gonzales said that he had high hopes for the government and the Legislature to "transform the non-profit educational institution" around.

"What are we waiting for? Put aside this 'politricks' and this nonsense shenanigans really, because at the end of the day, it's never been about me. It's about putting a straight face because we did good, and we can sleep good at night because we did good," said Gonzales. "I'm telling you I've been through thick and thin but the mission must remain focused."

Transition plan

Another concern at the meeting was the creation of a transition plan that would recognize NMTI as a government entity. NMTI is currently an autonomous entity, according to NMTI chief executive officer Agnes McPhetres.

Valentino confirmed that the institute did meet the 180-day deadline to come up with a transition plan but there were many challenges. "The goal was obviously to get to a transition plan before 180 days. …It was a tall order to do, with the volume of stuff that you had to do, and waiting on various things like audits, tagging, and listing everything and all the reports…so quite a bit of a challenge," said Valentino.

According to Valentino, there are still requirements that are lacking. "It's required by law for us to have certain things in the transition…that we must do," said Valentino.

Valentino said that they are learning along the way, as they are transitioning. One thing that the institution needs is an official auditor—a person who can conduct/inspect the institute's finances. NMTI does not have that.

McPhetres said that there is also a lack of communication between the two boards during the transitional phase.

In previous meetings, it has been said multiple times that before the transition happens, both boards want to be sure that all accounts are cleared so that the board of trustees have a "clean slate."

Scheduled power outage today

There will be a scheduled power service interruption today, Feb. 19, 2021, from 8:30am to 12:30pm for portions of Sadog Tasi.

According to a Commonwealth Utilities Corp. advisory, this sectionalized outage on the Feeder 4 circuit will primarily affect Sadog Tasi along Coastal Drive and will affect the Laguna Drive (partials), Trenchera Ln., Nonak Dr. and Coastal Dr. (partials). It will also affect the Puerto Rico and Calhoun Tank service areas but no wastewater lift station will be affected.

For more information, contact the CUC Customer Hotline (236-4333) or monitor its Facebook page for the latest updates (https://www.facebook.corn/CommonwealthUtilitiesCorporationfl. ***(PR)***

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COMMUNITY BRIEFS

Lions Clubs to hold health fair this Sunday

The Lions Clubs International in District 204, Region 2 will hold its annual health fair this Sunday, Feb. 21, from 7am to 12pm at Joeten Daidai Social Hall at the Mt. Carmel Cathedral.

The annual health fair's purpose is to provide medical services like blood pressure check, sugar/glucose testing, diabetes awareness, distribution of reading glasses, and general health awareness that will improve and maintain a healthy lifestyle. The health fair will start with an hour of Zumba activity, led by Saipan Fitbeat Lions Club.

For those who will do the glucose/sugar test, please don't take food or any drinks except water for eight hours before the testing. ***(PR)***

Temporary closure of AMP tennis courts

The American Memorial Park tennis courts are closed on weekdays starting last Feb. 16, 2021, until work is complete. Access will be restricted on certain courts and tennis players are asked to stay off courts that are marked closed during this time. Construction is underway to replace the tennis court lights damaged during Super Typhoon Yutu. Once the new lights are installed, the park looks forward to once again welcoming evening tennis players to the courts. ***(NPS)***

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Governor's Council of Economic Advisers officials, led by co-chairs Gov. Ralph DLG Torres, seated third left, and Jerry Tan, seated right, join Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios, seated fourth left, and government department heads for a group photo after holding a discussion on economic and destination transformation initiatives early this month in Capital Hill.

GCEA

From Page 1

and beyond.

The recommendations include strengthening the Public Private Partnership initiative; creation of a universal garbage collection and an improved power generation system, Commonwealth Economic Development Authority, tourism resumption blueprint, and a visitor's center; institution of branding requirement for hotels; and streamlining permitting and procurement processes.

"Moving forward with these critical proposals would require top level coordination and cooperation among the stakeholders, including our different government agencies. We've seen tremendous support from the business sector and non-government organizations for the PPP program last year amid the pandemic and they have pledged their continued support, so together with the assistance of our government agencies and our federal partners, we look forward to realizing these goals for the benefit of all residents of our islands," said Torres, who was joined at the presentation by Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

The lieutenant governor said that getting input and guidance from various government agencies will be crucial in the timely delivery of these projects.

Mike Sablan, who chairs the GCEA's Domestic Policy Recovery Committee, echoed Palacios, saying that to get projects off the ground as soon as possible, individuals or companies must be walked through streamlining the processes in permitting, procurement, and contract management. He added that working on fast and efficient processes in these challenging times is the best way to capitalize on the more-than-half-a-billion federal recovery grant funds available to the CNMI from the two super typhoons and the COVID-19 pandemic.

"This is the right time to stimulate our economy by executing projects as soon as possible to strengthen our infrastructure, rebuild homes, and create job opportunities for our residents. We won't be violating any laws nor compromise the safety of our people and our environment. We just want to work cohesively so we can rebuild our economy as fast as we can and provide a better quality life for all," Sablan said.

Meanwhile, Robert Hunter, the governor's senior policy adviser, said that even before GCEA's presentation, government agencies have been assisting the council in its campaign and the partnership will just get stronger as these projects progress. GCEA, through the PPP initiative, sought the adoption and transformation of destination sites and other key locations on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota and various government agencies assisted the council and its partners in securing permits for these projects. Some government agencies also participated in cleanup and beautification drives, providing PPP partners with equipment and manpower.

"The administration and respective government agencies and programs have already begun to take significant courses of action to address a number of the agreed-upon plans derived from the GCEA, from engaging in the PPP to revisiting the entirety of the current permitting process. The GCEA has created unprecedented dialogue and working partnership between the private and public sectors in a way that I have not seen over the course of my three decades in public service. We are only beginning to see the results of these efforts, and I expect this partnership and our focused direction, will be transformational," Hunter said.

Zoning administrator Geri Dela Cruz said permitting processes have been discussed among government agencies for quite some time now, with the ultimate goal of improving services and turnaround time for development projects in the CNMI, while continuing to ensure safety of structures and protection of the islands' resources. She added that, with the GCEA's recommendation of having a central database for permit requirements, each agency can have access to documents at the same time, creating an efficient and cohesive system. ***(PR)***

ROADS

From Page 1

in Oleai. The improvements include the reconstruction of existing roadway to upgrade the pavement. This encompasses asphalt concrete pavement with dense anti-skid including pavement markings, road shoulders, drainage systems, driveway connections, and traffic signage. The most notable features include sidewalks and bike lanes for pedestrians and cyclists between Chalan Piao and Oleai, especially within the commercial area of Chalan Kanoa and Susupe.

For Chalan Kalabera, also known as Windward Road (Route 36), the project involves approximately a mile of all-weather road between the Kingfisher Golf Course and the Bird Island Lookout on the northeastern coast of Saipan. The improvements include 12- and 11-foot-wide travel lanes, 4.5 feet wide shoulders/bike lanes on each side, roadside and road drainage crossings, permanent traffic markers and signs, roadside safety appurtenances, traffic signs and two bridges at the Unai Fanhang and Unai Nanasu crossings that will connect the San Juan Road to Talofofo Road.

At Tun Herman Pan Road, also known as Airport Road (Route 35), the project extends from the intersection of Chalan Monsignor Guerrero (Route 31) to the intersection of Flame Tree Road (Route 304). The project involves reconstruction of existing roadway and upgrade pavement structures that include roadway excavation, backfilling subbase and base courses, asphalt concrete pavement with dense anti-skid including pavement markings, traffic signage, guardrail, and drainage structure.

According to an Office of the Governor statement yesterday, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres and Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios assembled a working group of key government personnel called Highway Task Force to push federal highway projects to repair roads and better serve residents' transportation needs and accessibility.

Led by Palacios, the Highway Task Force—composed of civil engineers, planners, and administrators from the Department of Public Works and the Capital Improvement Program Office—have streamlined plans and funding through the Federal Highway Administration, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, Office of Insular Affairs, Economic Development Administration, and the Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Relief.

A longer version of this story is available at www. saipantribune.com

CHCC

From Page 1

Meanwhile, even if the CNMI has not had a community transmission since August 2020, Gov. Ralph DLG Torres said in a radio news briefing last Friday that the CNMI will remain at Level Blue for community vulnerability. This is a step above Level Green, which is the safest level.

Torres said that even if there has been no instance of community transmission for many months now, the CNMI should not let its guard down. "We are safe now, but it does not guarantee that we will be safe tomorrow, the next few days, or even the next few months," he said.

Recently, Torres renewed the declaration of a state of public health emergency in the CNMI with the continuation of the declaration of a state of significant emergency establishing response, quarantine, and preventive COVID-19 measures.

He also renewed his order directing the CNMI Homeland Security and Emergency Management Office to take necessary COVID-19 containment measures and emergency directives to protect the health and safety of the public through the CNMI COVID-19 Task Force and in partnership with CHCC.

"It's to make sure that we acknowledge that, although we're safe here, we are still in a declaration of emergency and we need to be one step ahead of the game," said Torres, adding that dealing with a pandemic is not easy. "It's difficult seeing COVID-19 affecting the world and our neighboring island of Guam."

LONG

From Page 1

tion will occur on March 6 in two different sites: Garapan Fishing Base and the Koblerville Youth Center.

One of the requirements in order to be given a ticket was a physical copy of a billing statement or meter number, which will determine household and residency. One ticket was issued per one billing statement or meter number.

Each ticket will provide a case of chicken, a case of ramen noodles, a sack of rice, and canned goods.

The U.S. Department of the Interior's Office of Insular Affairs recently gave the CNMI $281,400 so it could buy the food items that will be handed out for this purpose.

According to Cabrera, they have already completed giving out relief goods on Tinian and Rota. He expects to provide relief to 24,000 people in all.

Staff members of both the Office of Grants Management and the Department of Public Safety worked to direct the long line of vehicles where to go and keep them in order throughout the pre-registration process.

OGM State Clearinghouse specialist Frankie Angel stood between two domino-sequenced lines of cars and shared his experience with the distribution. "It's been pretty chaotic, but we've been doing our best to voice out to the community to remain patient, listen to the radio and follow our Facebook page: @Office of Grants and Managements and State Clearinghouse for official announcements." ***(Neil Fama)***

More parking and one-way streets coming to Garapan

The Garapan Revitalization Task Force, led by the Office of Planning & Development under the Office of the Governor, has re-initiated steps to improve the flow of traffic in Western Garapan.

In partnership with the Department of Public Works, Department of Public Safet, and the Department of Fire and Emergency Medical Services, which are members of the GRTF, it was determined that in order to improve overall traffic flow, promote the safety and wellbeing of pedestrians and moving vehicles, and increase public parking space in the primary commercial district of the Commonwealth, certain streets must be designated as one-way streets in Western Garapan, otherwise known as Garapan Core or Hotel Street.

These modifications will help ensure a safer environment for residents and visitors. Upon completion of this entire project, it is estimated that the plan will allow approximately 300 parking spaces available for public use. The Tournament of Champions nonprofit organization, whose mission is to support island beautification and enhancement projects, has donated directional signs valued at $13,385.55, with additional support coming from Safety 1st Systems CNMI, Inc. DPW will be responsible for signage installation. TanHoldings also donated traffic paint for road markings and parking lines.

"The Garapan Revitalization Plan is a major priority for our administration. We believe these steps taken by the task force will go a long way toward relieving the concerns regarding traffic flow and parking in our main commercial district. This is especially important as we continue to strengthen our tourism industry in the wake of this unanticipated economic downturn. We commend OPD, DPW, DFEMS, and the rest of the task force for leading this effort, and we thank the TOC and Safety 1st for their generous contributions," said Gov. Ralph DLG Torres.

"The overall goal of the GRTF is to transform Garapan Core and its immediate vicinity into a world-class tourist destination in and of itself. The task force has been working diligently towards improving the area, while simultaneously working on the larger objective of securing federal funding to undertake a complete overhaul and rehabilitation of Garapan Core. We are certain these incremental steps will have a positive impact on the businesses in the area and will encourage more residents and visitors to frequent Garapan as more parking spaces open up and streets become more navigable," said Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

"With the recent awarding of $11.2 million funding from the U.S. Economic Development Administration, the GRTF feels it is an opportune time to make some minor improvements to the Garapan Core area, while the full Garapan revitalization project gets underway. The task force has been meeting regularly to discuss ways to improve the overall experience for drivers and pedestrians in Garapan Core. DFEMS reviewed existing fire lanes and determined many can be removed to allow for more street parking. We worked with DPW to map out which streets should be designated one-way, and in which direction, based on their existing traffic plans. What Garapan Core lacks is a sense of order so modifying select streets to make them one-way will allow for parallel street parking on one side, while leaving room on the other for through-traffic and emergency vehicles to pass. One of the top concerns of the community is the lack of parking in Garapan so the task force determined this is the most practical way to alleviate these concerns," said OPD deputy director Christopher A. Concepcion.

The proposed street directional changes include the following:

- Cpl. Derence Jack Rd. one-way westbound from Beach Rd. to Coral Tree Ave.
- Royal Palm Ave. one-way northbound from Cpl. Derence Jack Rd. to Micro Beach Rd.
- Coffee Tree Mall one-way southbound from Coconut St. to Cpl. Derence Jack Rd.
- Coffee Tree Mall one-way southbound from Micro Beach Rd. to Palm St.
- Ginger Ave. one-way northbound from Cpl. Derence Jack Rd. to Coconut St.
- Ginger Ave. one-way northbound from Palm St. to Micro Beach Rd.
- Plumeria Ave. one-way southbound from Coconut St. to Cpl. Derence Jack Rd.
- Plumeria Ave. one-way southbound from Micron Beach Rd. to Palm St.
- Coconut St. one-way eastbound from Coral Tree Ave. to Beach Rd.
- Date St. one-way westbound from Coffee Tree Mall to Coral Tree Ave.

Installation of the street signs for these directional changes will begin next Monday, Feb. 22, 2021. Residents are advised to refer to the diagram in newspapers and on social media at the CNMI Office of the Governor.

The GRTF consists of government agencies and private businesses including DFS Saipan, Ltd., Hyatt Regency Saipan, I Love Saipan, Imperial Pacific Resort, J.C. Tenorio Enterprises, Inc., PDM Promoters, Inc., TanHoldings, and Triple J Saipan, Inc. ***(PR)***

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Attorney for Petitioner Merced M. Tomokane for Claimant Bank of Guam

IN THE SUPERIOR COURT FOR THE COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS

IN THE MATTER OF THE ESTATE OF DIMAS ATALIG HOCOG, Deceased.	Civil Action No. 11-0010 AMENDED NOTICE OF HEARING ON AMENDED PETITION FOR LETTERS OF ADMINISTRATION AND APPOINTMENT OF ADMINISTRATOR; and NOTICE TO CREDITORS Judge: Joseph N. Camacho Date: March 4, 2021 Time: 10:00 a.m. Courtroom: Superior Court

TO: THE GENERAL PUBLIC, ANY HEIRS, CLAIMANTS, OR CREDITORS THE LATE DIMAS ATALIG HOCOG:

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that Petitioner Merced M. Tomokane for Claimant Bank of Guam, has petitioned the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands to issue Letters of Administration for the **Estate of Dimas Atalig Hocog, Decedent**. The attorney for Petitioner is **Robert T. Torres, Attorney at Law, whose address is Plata Drive, Chalan Kiya, P.O. Box 503758, Saipan, MP 96950**.

The hearing on the Amended Petition for Letters of Administration and Appointment of Administrator by **Merced M. Tomokane for Claimant Bank of Guam**, as Petitioner, is scheduled to be heard on **March 4, 2021 at 10:00 a.m.**, at the Superior Court of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Guma' Hustisia, Civic Center, Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. **All** interested persons or entities should appear at this hearing.

Any and **all** persons, creditors, or entities having **claims** against the Decedent or his Estate are hereby required by **law** to **file** their claims with the Clerk of Court within Sixty (60) days of the first publication, or the claim(s) **will** be barred. A copy of your claim should also be sent to **ROBERT T. TORRES, Attorney at Law, at the address herein-above indicated**.

Dated this 12th day of February, 2021.

By: /s/
Clerk of Court/Deputy Clerk of Court

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLAND
WEBEX MEETING FEBRUARY 23, 2021

U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs
Honolulu Regional Office - Public Contact Team

Will host a Virtual Benefits Workshop for Veterans, Family Members, Surviving Spouses, and Community Providers
on
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2021

From
5:00PM-7:00PM (CNMI LOCAL TIME)

To participate please join us in Cisco Webex by clicking or copying and pasting the following link:

**DOWNLOAD SLIDES AT: https://www.benefits.va.gov/honolulu/

https://veteransaffairs.webex.com/veteransaffairs/j.php?MTID=ma 0c4b5a9905c1e48148bcc671fa9b9ed

You can join via Computer, Phone Audio (1-404-397-1596, 1998705956##), or Webex Mobile App

Benefits Workshop Topics:

Compensation, Pension, Education & Training, DIC, Survivor Benefits, Loan Guaranty, Veteran Readiness & Employment, Burial and Plot Internment Allowance, Burial Flags, & Insurance

Let the 2021 Toyota Venza finally convince you to go hybrid

The all-new 2021 Toyota Venza crossover utility vehicle is an all-wheel-drive hybrid vehicle with an intuitive driving experience, smooth acceleration, predictable handling, low noise, vibration, and harshness, all wrapped in a sophisticated design.

BEA CABRERA

By BEA CABRERA
beacabrerasaipan@gmail.com
CORRESPONDENT

After six years of hiatus, the Toyota Venza is back in the market, this time more competitive as ever because it now a part of the new-generation Toyota Hybrid System. If you are searching for your first car or "other" car, consider this crossover utility vehicle that is nimble, easy to handle, gives you the right height and space, environment friendly and, most importantly, saves you tons of gas money.

"Toyota hybrid models Prius and Prius C are popular with Saipan's taxi industry because of their superior gas mileage. Now the Venza combines energy efficiency with an elevated fit and finish in a family vehicle," said AK Saipan vice president and general manager Joel Lesh. "We are proud to support Toyota with the Venza and other hybrid models in the Saipan market. We share Toyota's vision toward sustainable mobility on the road and beyond."

According to Atkins Kroll, Inc. sales manager Kevin Barnes, now is the best time for people for consider getting a Toyota Venza hybrid vehicle and the target market is across the board. "With the recent increase in gas prices, a hybrid vehicle will help unburden the load of spending a lot of money on gas. …I have extreme confidence in the Toyota Venza. …The market demographics of this vehicle ranges from young to old individuals or couples because it does a little bit of everything for everybody," he said.

Toyota Venza has a mileage of 39 miles per gallon for city driving like here on Saipan. Being a hybrid, it is gas-powered and then, at a certain speed, the electric battery will kick in and switch to electric. While the gas power is in use, it charges the electric battery and when the electric battery takes over, it is full. "It is akin to a 'symbiotic relationship,' where one feeds the other so one can power up and one can rest," Barnes added.

The Venza doesn't take up a lot of space outside yet provides generous space inside.

BEA CABRERA

The Toyota Venza combines a high-efficiency 2.5-liter DOHC (dual overhead camshaft) four-cylinder engine with three electric motors in a highly compact system. The gas engine employs a Variable Valve Timing-intelligent system that improves performance and fuel economy. For improved engine efficiency, a variable cooling system (electric water pump and electric thermostat) is in place.

Test driving the Toyota Venza around the island was a delight. Since the Venza is a "crossover utility vehicle," it gives you the comfort of a sedan with a height of a pickup truck and going from Atkins Kroll in San Jose through the backroad was smooth and steady.

On its own, the 'Toyota Safety Sense (TSS 2.0) is at work as soon as you turn on the engine. I like the Lane Tracing Assist, which tells you the size of the road, the vehicle in front of you, and keeps you centered in your lane.

I was impressed with the Road Sign Assist feature, which tells you the speed limit on that particular road in case you miss the sign on the road. A light in the monitor in front will tell you how slow or fast you can go. From San Jose where the speed limit is 35 mph, it switched to 45 mph when I entered Monsignor Deleon Guerrero Road.

Other TSS features include pre-collision system with daytime/low-light vehicle; a pedestrian detection and daytime bicyclist detection that offers automatic braking should the driver not react in time in an emergency; and a blind spot monitor with rear cross-traffic alert (standard on all grades). Other Venza models—XLE and Limited—also have front and rear parking assist with automated braking (PA w/AB), full-speed range dynamic radar cruise control, lane departure alert with steering assist, and automatic high beams.

The Toyota Venza is also equipped with eight airbags, including side curtain airbags. Toyota's Star Safety System includes Enhanced Vehicle Stability Control, Traction Control, Electronic Brake-force Distribution, Brake Assist, Anti-lock Braking System, and Smart Stop Technology, giving you an invisible assistant driver whenever on the road.

Visibility-enhancing technology surrounds the driver. The Venza LE grade features a 4.2-inch color MID, while the XLE and Limited trims have a 7-inch color MID. A Hybrid System Indicator shows the driver system output and regeneration status to encourage eco-driving habits in either display. As used on other Toyota hybrid models, the display monitor suggests the optimal acceleration amount for eco-driving and provides a game-like scoring function for the driver.

Going up the hill on Monsignor Deleon Guerrero Road, I challenged Toyota Venza's responsiveness and the Venza's hybrid system optimizes electric motor assistance and gas engine without running at high revs, making the uphill climb effortless.

It won't be a true test drive if I didn't try driving on dirt roads where you speed up and then slow down for bumps and holes and the Venza's hybrid system enhances ride comfort by finely controlling the drive torque to suppress pitch under acceleration and deceleration. From Navy Hill down to Puerto Rico, the Toyota Venza's power handled the downhill drive very well and its torque did not fall short.

The inside is spacious, making for a comfortable drive. Cupholders can accommodate large drink sizes, while the center stack tray can handle the large iPhone models. Door bottle holders can take 24-oz bottles. Venza offers 28.8 cubic ft. of carrying space behind the second row and owners can store the standard tonneau cover in the deck board's storage space when not in use. The exterior is sleek and has edges at right angles—not too soft or tough, making the Toyota Venza appeal to any age group and looks game for any adventure.

As for maintenance, Barnes said that it will not be an issue with the Toyota Venza Hybrid system. "Our ability to give service gets better and better as each year goes by. We will see less and less maintenance just because Toyota continues to improve and develop its hybrid technology and it has come a long way," he said. "Toyota commercial hybrid vehicles, including the Toyota Venza, will continue to grow as it is aimed at resolving environmental issues and would benefit anyone that would like to spend less money on gas. …This is ultimately part of the company's new sustainable development goals by 2030."

The Venza LE grade features a 4.2-inch color MID, while XLE and Limited trims receive a 7-inch color MID. A hybrid system indicator shows the driver system output and regeneration status to encourage eco-driving habits in either display.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

ADVERTISING Feature

VENZA
ALL-NEW.
REDESIGNED.
2021.
Elegance Elevated
• All-hybrid powertrain w/ up to 40* miles per gallon
• Hands Free Power Lift Gate with Jam Protection
• Electronic On-Demand All-Wheel Drive (AWD)
• Available Star Gaze™ fixed panoramic roof — electrochromic fixed panoramic glass roof with on/off control and power sunshade
• Available Heads-Up Display
• Toyota Safety Sense™ 2.0 (Pre-Collision System with Pedestrian Detection, Lane Departure Alert with Steering Assist, Lane Tracing Assist, Automatic High Beams, Dynamic Radar Cruise Control and Road Sign Assist
Visit AK today for a Drive It Your Way Test-Drive.
HYBRID
* Actual mileage may vary. Vehicle not exactly as shown.

2021 RAV4
4 Real life
• Toyota Safety Sense (Pre-Collision System, Lane Departure Alert with Assist and Automatic High Beams)
• 7-Inch Touch Screen Display
• Rear Backup Camera
• Available Smart Key w/Push Button Start, Hands-Free Power Liftgate and AWD
RAV4 LE AS LOW AS
$160*
PER PAYCHECK
FREE 65" SAMSUNG SMART TV*
WITH YOUR NEW 2021 TOYOTA RAV4
Shop on AKSaipan.com with
ONLINE SHOPPER
*On approved credit. Conditions apply. See dealer for details. Rav4 LE SP $29,999. Monthly payment $347.18. Total deferred. $27,079.90. 3.75% APR with 78 months term financing and 20% down payment. Per paycheck based on 26 pay periods. Vehicle not exactly as shown.

AK SINCE 1914
Atkins Kroll (Saipan), Inc.
#1 Chalan Msr Guerrero San Jose
Saipan, MP 96950

Call 234-5911
Showroom Hours: Monday to Saturday 8am to 5 pm

Let's Go Places

HERE FOR SAIPAN. HERE FOR LIFE.

ONLINE SHOPPER at AKsaipan.com

Palacios: Small steps taken for economy to bounce back

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Even with the challenges the CNMI is facing due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Torres-Palacios administration is taking steps to revive the economy, according to Lt. Gov. Arnold I. Palacios.

In an interview Wednesday at his office, Palacios also urged the community to continue adhering to the Governor's COVID-19 health protocols to keep the islands and its people safe. He said the CNMI has managed to keep its COVID-19 infections low—"We've done it. We've done it very well"—but the community must still not put its guard down.

Palacios just arrived on Saipan from the U.S. mainland two weeks ago after he was gone for three months due to a medical issue.

» 'With pandemic, bringing in construction workers a challenge'

He said the administration is working very hard in looking at different ways to begin to, at least in increments, revive the economy, with business partners sitting down at the table with the Governor's Economic Advisory Council to explore their options. He said they are also listening to some recommendations from others who are not in the advisory council on how to improve the economy.

Palacios

"We're taking a look at how we will bounce back," the lieutenant governor said.

He noted that because of COVID-19 protocols, even the disaster programs on super typhoon constructions, infrastructure, and housing are a major challenge today.

Palacios said there are still a lot of homes that need to be built or repaired and even the Federal Emergency Management Agency is encountering many challenges with sourcing construction workers.

"Bringing in additional [construction] workers has been a challenge," he said.

Palacios said he wants to continue asking people to be patient because there's a lot of things that are also out of the government's control.

For the things that they can control, Palacios said they will try to fix them.

JOB VACANCY ANNOUNCEMENT
AUDIT MANAGER

EXAMINATION NO. OPA-21-001
Opening Date: 1/14/21 Closing Date: Until Filled

For more information, please visit our website at www.opacnmi.com or come visit us at our office in Capitol Hill. Interested persons may also pick up a copy of the Examination Announcement at the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) in Garapan.

Office of the Public Auditor
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Website: http://opacnmi.com
Address: 1236 Yap Drive, Capital Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Mailing Address: PO Box 501399, Saipan MP 96950
Email: mail@opacnmi.com
Phone: (670) 322-6481 Fax: (670) 322-7812

COMMONWEALTH CASINO COMMISSION
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
P.O. Box 500237, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel: 1 (670) 233-1857/58 • Fax: 1 (670) 233-1856
Website: www.cnmicasinocommission.com
Email: info@cnmicasinocommission.com

AGENDA

***** February 24, 2021 *****

Pursuant to the Open Government Act, Governor Ralph DLG. Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Commonwealth Casino Commission ("Commission"), hereby give notice that the Commission has scheduled its regular monthly meeting on Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. at the Commission's 2nd Floor Main Conference Room at the Springs Plaza in Gualo Rai, Saipan. However, pursuant to Governor Torres' Executive Orders and Directives on the ongoing threat from the COVID-19 pandemic and the limited space available, access to the Commission's meeting will also be available via video conference.

The following Agenda will be discussed:

I. PRELIMINARIES:

A. Call to Order
B. Roll Call
C. Adoption of Agenda
D. Adoption of Minutes. January 20, 2020

II. REPORTS:

A. Report by the Chairman
B. Report by the Executive Director

III. PUBLIC COMMENTS

IV. MISCELLANEOUS MATTERS:

A. Casino Licensee -- Imperial Pacific International (CNMI), LLC ("IPI") -- Updates:
   1. Imperial Pacific Resort & Hotel ("IPR"). Update on the construction project
   2. IPI Personnel:
      a) Organizational Chart Update
      b) Resident Employment Objectives
      c) Status of Employee Payroll
      d) Status of Employee Housing
   3. IPI Financial Matters.
      a) Annual Exclusive Casino License Fee
      b) Annual Casino Regulatory Fee
B. Other Miscellaneous Matters

V. OLD BUSINESS:

A. Administrative Evidentiary Hearings – Announcement of Schedules:
   1. February 25-26, 2021: Consolidated Complaint #20-001
   2. March 2-3, 2021: Consolidated Complaint #20-003
   B. Other Old Business Matters

VI. NEW BUSINESS:

A. IPI's Provisional Casino Key Employee License Application. Submitted by Ray N. Yumul
B. Approval of CCC's Fiscal Year 2022 Budget Appropriations Request.
C. Senate Bill No. 22-09, SD1. A Bill for An Act *"To amend 4 CMC § 2313(g) relative to the compensation of the commissioners; to amend 4 CMC § 2314 to separate the regulation of the casino gaming and the hotel facilities; and for other purposes".*
D. Senate Bill No. 22-23. A Bill for An Act *"To authorize a second casino license in the event that the exclusive casino license is revoked by the Commonwealth Casino Commission; and for other purposes".*

VII. EXECUTIVE SESSION:

A. Consult with Legal Counsel
B. Report by the CCC Divisions (Enforcement, Compliance, and Audit)

VIII. ADJOURNMENT

The Commission reserves the right to amend this Agenda and take action on the amended Agenda pursuant to 1 CMC §9910 (b). Pursuant to 1 CMC §9912 (a)(7) and 1 CMC §9912 (c), the Commission may vote to meet in Executive Session. In addition, the Commission may extend its official meeting for another day or more, if necessary. For those interested in joining or attending the meeting via video conference, please contact the Commission at info@cnmicasinocommission.com for instructions on how to log-in to the conference site.

/s/ Edward C. DeLeon Guerrero
Chairman

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW21-ITB-014

SUBMISSION DATE: March 25, 2021 TIME: 9:30 A.M.

"Supply and Delivery of a Combination Wet / Dry Vacuum Track for the Department of Public Works, Saipan"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

A non-refundable payment of **Fifty Dollars ($50.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at DPW Technical Services Division required for each set.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **March 09, 2021**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the **Roads and Ground Office Lower Base**. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **March 17, 2021** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS
CNMI GOVERNMENT

INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: DPW21-ITB-019

SUBMISSION DATE: February 25, 2021 TIME: 10:00 A.M.

"Supply, Delivery & Installation of all Mass Hazards Warning Alert System for Saipan at Four (4) Pre-Identified Sites"

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE TECHNICAL SERVICES DIVISION, DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS, LOCATED ON SECOND FLOOR, OLEAI JOETEN COMMERCIAL CENTER, SAN JOSE, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIAC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars ($100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at DPW Technical Services Division required for each set.

There will be a **Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **March 09, 2021**, 9:00 a.m. local time at the **Homeland Security Emergency Management.** The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All question regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **March 17, 2021** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ JAMES A. ADA
SECRETARY, DPW

/S/ GERALD J. DELEON GUERRERO
HOMELAND SECURITY MANAGEMENT

/S/FRANCISCO C. AGUON
ACTING DIRECTOR, P&S

PacificRIM
CNMI, LLC.

Career Opportunities

PREMIERE CNMI Construction Company is looking for qualified and committed individuals for the following "Long Term" positions.

- **Superintendent**
- **Foreman**
- **Accounting Assistant**

U.S. Eligible Workers Competitive Salary and Benefits

Interested candidates may email your resumes to esannicolas@pacificrimco.net or call 670.588.7746.

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
CNMI PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM
Early Intervention Program

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENT

Pursuant to Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act 2004, & GEPA, the Public School System Early Intervention Program is required to provide at least 60 days prior to submission of grant applications for funds, a 60 day circulation notice with an opportunity for public comment on the application for at least 30 days during that period and provide an opportunity for the general public, including individuals with disabilities and parents of infants, toddlers and youth with disabilities, to provide comments.

DUE TO THE OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS ON MAY 7, 2021

60-Day Public Circulation Period: February 22, 2021 to April 22, 2021
30-Day Public Comment Period: March 1, 2021 to March 30, 2021

Hard copies of the Grant Applications are available from Monday-Friday, 8:00am-4:00pm at the following location:

Early Intervention Program Office in Garapan (670) 664-4841

Comments may be submitted by fax to (670) 664-4846, hand delivered to the Early Intervention Program Office located in Garapan or phone in your comments at (670) 664-4841.

Electronic copies of the Grant Application can be accessed on https://www.cnmipss.org/early-intervention-program.

For more information, please contact Robin L. Palacios, Director, Early Intervention Program at (670) 664-4841.

Casa Urashima is latest NMC ProaPerks Partner

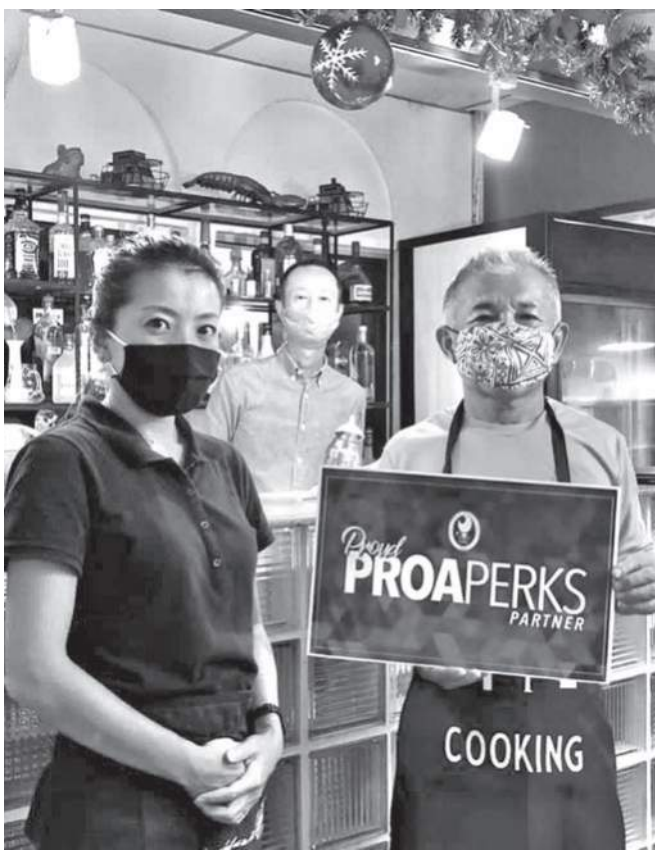
Casa Urashima is the latest business to sign on as a Northern Marianas College ProaPerks Partner, joining many other businesses and organizations that provide exclusive discounts and benefits for NMC students, employees, and alumni.

All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive free sorbet with dinner (available for dine-in customers only) when dining at Casa Urashima, which is located behind the Kristo Rai Church in Garapan.

NMC is in the introductory phase of rolling out the ProaPerks to alumni, students, and employees. For more information, visit marianas.edu/proaperks.

Casa Urashima joins the growing list of ProaPerks partners that now number more than 60 across the CNMI.

Companies and other interested organizations who would like to become part of the ProaPerks program and take advantage of the buying power of thousands of individuals that include Northern Marianas College alumni, students, and employees, can find more information by emailing proaperks@marianas.edu. ***(PR)***



Casa Urashima is now a proud NMC ProaPerks Partner. All card-carrying members of the NMC ProaPerks program can now receive free sorbet with dinner (available for dine-in customers only).
NMC

NORTHERN MARIANAS TRADES INSTITUTE

BOARD OF TRUSTEES SPECIAL MEETING
AT NMTI, LOWER BASE
FEBRUARY 22, 2021 – 9:30AM

AGENDA

I. Meeting Called to Order

(Establishment of a quorum)

II. Adoption of Agenda

III. Public Comments

IV. New Business

1. Transition

A. Appointment of Interim CEO

B. Establishment of Institute Accounts

C. Employee Contracts

D. Da'ok Academy

VIII. Adjournment

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
BOARD OF PROFESSIONAL LICENSING
P.O. Box 502078, Bldg., 1242 Pohnpei Court
Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP 96950
Tel No: (670) 664-4809 Fax: (670) 664-4814
Email: cnmi@cnmibpl-hcplb.net
Website: cnmibpl-hcplb.net

Pursuant to P. L. 8-41, Section 11, Governor Ralph Torres and Lt. Governor Arnold I. Palacios, through the Board of Professional Licensing (BPL) are hereby giving notice that it will hold its quarterly board meeting on **Wednesday, February 24, 2021 at 8:00a.m.** on Saipan. The meeting will be held at the Governor's Office Conference Room, Capitol Hill, Saipan.

AGENDA

I. Meeting Call to Order
II. Determination of Quorum
III. Review and Adoption of Agenda (November 24, 2020)
IV. Review and Adoption of Minutes
V. Public Comments
VI. Chairman's Report
VII. Director's Report
  A. Financial Report
  B. FY2022 Propose Budget
  C. NCEES and CLARB Virtual Meetings
VIII. Investigator's Report
IX. Communications from the Governor's Office & Legislature
  A. Governor's Office
    1.) OMB FY2022 Budget Call
  B. Legislature
X. Old Business
XI. Executive Session: The Board may vote to meet in executive session to consult with counsel with pending or anticipated legal matters.
XII. New Business
XIII. Applications for Board's Review
XIV. Miscellaneous Business
XV. Announcements
  A. Next Meeting Date
  B. Adjournment of Meeting

Commonwealth Utilities Corporation
Office of the Executive Director

INVITATION FOR BIDS
CUC-IFB-21-018

RELOCATION OF UTILITIES AT ROAD (A-F) AND ROUTE 205/206 TINIAN

The Office of the Executive Director, Commonwealth Utilities Corporation (CUC) is soliciting competitive sealed bids from qualified firms for the Relocation of Utilities at Road A-F and Route 205/206 in Tinian, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands. The project consists, in general relocation of gate valves, water meters, waterlines, fire hydrant assembly and other related work. The work shall be done in accordance with the Project Plans and Specifications and without disruption to the daily operation of the water system.

This project is funded by a grant from the United States Department of Defense (USDOD). The award of this project is contingent upon receipt of the approval for project award from USDOD.

CUC requires the Project to be completed in **180 calendar days** from date of award of contract.

Prospective Bidders for this IFB must pre-register with the CUC Procurement & Supply Division. The Bid Package may be obtained from the CUC Procurement and Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, Saipan, between 7:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m. to 4:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except on government observed holidays, upon completion of registration and presentation of a receipt evidencing a non-refundable payment to the CUC Treasury Section, by cash, check or credit card in the amount of $200.00 (non-refundable) for one IFB package set.

A Pre-Bid Conference is scheduled on **February 2, 2021 at 10:00 AM (ChST)** at the CUC Conference Room, 3rd Floor, Room No.17, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building.

One (1) original and Five (5) hard copies must be submitted in a sealed envelope marked **"CUC-IFB-21-018, *Relocation of Utilities at Road A-F and Route 205/206 Tinian*"**, to the CUC Procurement & Supply Office, 3rd Floor, Room No. 3, Joeten Dandan Commercial Building, P.O. Box 501220, Saipan, MP 96950, no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 25, 2021**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud. Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered. Bid shall be submitted on the provided Bid Forms. Bidders are required to complete all Bid Forms. Bidders may supplement the form as appropriate. Bids will be required to be submitted under a condition of irrevocability for a period of 60 days after submission. **Late submissions and conditional bids will not be considered.**

All bidders are advised that CUC assumes no responsibility in any act of omission on the part of the bidders due to lack of information or understanding of the bid requirements in the course of Contractor's preparation of a bid under the contract.

A Bid Guarantee of not less than fifteen (15%) of the total bid price shall accompany the bids. The security deposit may be in cash, certified check, cashier's check, or bid bond executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

A Payment Bond of one hundred (100%) percent and a Performance Bond of one hundred (100%) percent of the total bid price will be required upon the execution of the contract by the successful bidders. The Payment and Performance bond must be executed by a surety company holding a certificate of authority from the United States Secretary of Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General.

All insurers' questions, concerns and qualification shall be handled by the Department of Commerce Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). The OIC is tasked with regulating and monitoring compliance to the CNMI's Insurance Code (Title 4, Division 7). **Bidders are required to submit a clearance from the OIC certifying their insurer of choice is in compliance with the CNMI's Insurance Code.**

All bidders are required to comply with all CNMI and applicable Federal Laws. This bid and the ensuing contract shall be executed pursuant to the CUC Procurement Regulations.

All questions or request for clarification regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than **10:00 AM (ChST) on February 09, 2021** to Mr. Manny B. Sablan, CUC Purchasing Administrator, via email – manny.sablan@cucgov.org with a copy to Mr. Joel Puyat, CUC Water/Wastewater Engineer – via email joel.puyat@cucgov.org and Marcela Tenorio, Procurement & Supply, Administrative Technician, Senior – via email marcela.tenorio@cucgov.org.

CUC reserves the right to reject any or all bids and waive any non-material imperfection in the bid proposal in the best interest of the government. All bids shall become the property of CUC.

GARY P. CAMACHO
Executive Director

MANNY B. SABLAN
Purchasing Officer

NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION
Community Development Block Grant – Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) Division
P.O. BOX 500514, Saipan, MP 96950-0514
Email: cnmi-cdbg-dr@nmhcgov.net | Website: http://www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com
Tels: (670) 233-9447 / 233-9448 / 233-9449 / 233-9450 | Fax: (670) 233-9452

Notice of Program Availability
Community Development Block Grant Disaster Recovery (CDBG-DR) – Housing Programs

The Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) wishes to announce the availability of the CDBG-DR Housing Programs. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) has allocated the CNMI a total of $243,946,000 to aid in the recovery of Typhoon Mangkhut and Super Typhoon Yutu. $113,362,000 of the total amount is allocated to Housing Programs.

Eligibility Criteria

- Must be a U.S. Citizen, U.S. Permanent Resident, a U.S. National, or a qualified alien;
- Gross annual household income, according to size of household, must not exceed 120% of median income; and
- Must provide proof of ownership such as fee simple title to the property and not located in a floodplain.

Information on the CDBG-DR Housing Programs

- Elderly and/or disable applicants who were displaced by the storms are prioritized. However, eligible applicants that are mortgage ready will be prioritized on a first come, first serve basis over the elderly and/or disabled applicants who are not mortgage ready.
- Type of Financial Assistance:
  - Deferred Loans
  - Non-Interest (zero-interest) Bearing Loans
- **Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Program** loan amount: $10,000 up to the maximum HOME per-unit subsidy limits that apply to the CNMI as determined by HUD.
- **Homebuyer Program** loan amount: $1,000 to $250,000.

Application Steps

- Pre-qualification applications and checklist are available for pick up at the CDBG-DR Office and the NMHC Offices on Saipan, Tinian, and Rota or print an application made available on the NMHC and CDBG-DR websites at www.nmhcgov.net and www.cnmi-cdbgdr.com.
- Completed pre-qualification applications are being accepted at the NMHC CDBG-DR Office located on the 3rd Floor of the Ladera Building, Chalan Laulau, Beach Road, Saipan, NMHC Tinian Field Office (NMC Campus), and the NMHC Rota Field Office, Monday to Friday from 8:00 AM to 3:00 PM except Holidays.
- Once the pre-application is completed and submitted, the case workers will assess the pre-qualification application and determine whether the applicant is eligible for the programs(s). If the applicant is eligible, the case worker will schedule an appointment with the applicant. If an applicant is deemed ineligible, a notification will be sent to the applicant.
- The case worker will inform the eligible applicant of the next steps once the pre-qualification application process has been completed.

Should you have any questions or need special accommodations, please contact the CDBG-DR office at 233-9447.

"NMHC is an equal employment and fair housing public agency"

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
Volume XXXI, Issue No. 35

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EDITORIAL

Texas knew for years power grid was at risk but did little about it.

Once again, Texans are suffering because of a failure of disaster planning and investment to prepare for the worst.

First, it was the pandemic. Texas' public health infrastructure has been shown for a year to be lacking, at both local and state levels. Leaders tried to craft a plan in 2015 to prepare for the inevitable, but it was stopped over political issues.

This time, it's an unprecedented—but, importantly, not unpredictable—stretch of cold weather and storms blanketing the entire state. Public and private sector leaders may try to say there's no way they could have been prepared for this. That's a line of bull that no Texan should accept.

After 2011's epic winter storm—known around here as the one that ruined the Super Bowl in Arlington—agencies at all levels offered recommendations to address the very problems that contributed to this outage, too.

There must be accountability. People must be fired. Companies must be fined and required to do better. Winterization of power plants must be a priority.

The immediate focus, of course, is on getting power back up as quickly as possible. Lives are at stake. If more electricity can't be generated, blackouts must be rotated to offer relief to Texans who've been without power for a day or more.

Power companies and the Electric Reliability Council of Texas, or ERCOT, as every Texan now knows, have compounded the problem with miserably poor communication and broken promises. The promise of rotating outages flopped, and no one can explain why in plain English.

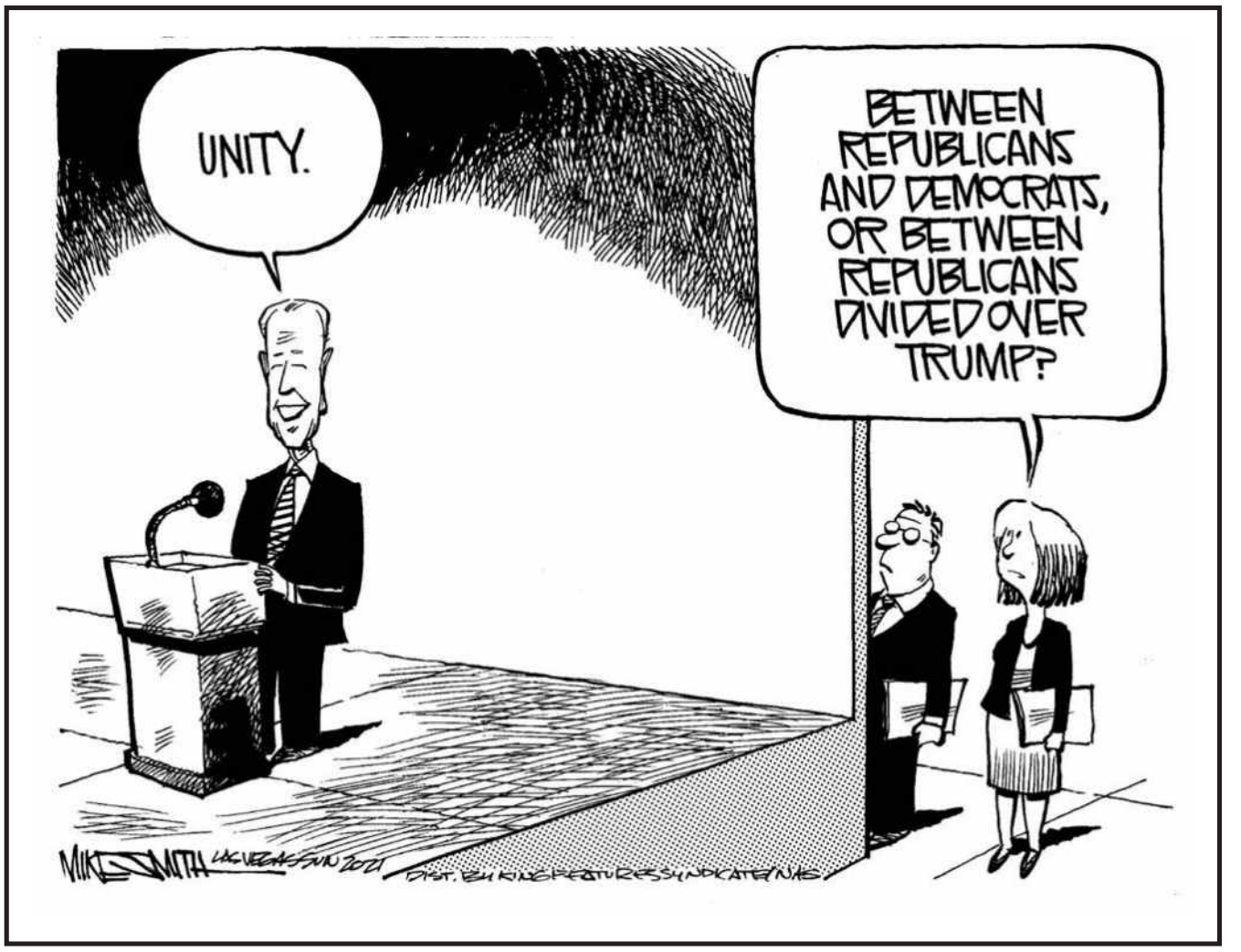
Once the crisis is over, laws must change. A thorough investigation of both the public and private actors is necessary. Gov. Greg Abbott's declaration that ERCOT reform is an emergency priority for the Legislature is a start, but only that. Generators must be required to do a better job of winter preparation, even if the state or consumers must ultimately help pay the bill.

The failures here are spectacular and obvious. In November, ERCOT proudly announced that the state had sufficient energy supply for the winter. The excuse will likely be that no one could have predicted this storm. But it's been evident for more than a week that a brutal cold was coming, and ERCOT officials were saying as late as Thursday that the system was ready. How can they have been so stupefyingly wrong?

But these cold snaps are not that rare. After the 2011 debacle, a thorough federal review found that parts of the Southwest have suffered these events at least every five years.

Texas is an energy giant. This shouldn't happen here. We have a large and diverse energy supply. The culprit here is a clear failure of preparation, period.

See TEXAS on Next Page


UNITY.
BETWEEN REPUBLICANS AND DEMOCRATS, OR BETWEEN REPUBLICANS DIVIDED OVER TRUMP?
MIKE SMITH LAS VEGAS SUN 2021
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Emergency powers in times of crisis

By NICK MURRAY
Tribune News Service

Nick Murray is a policy analyst with the Maine Policy Institute. Twitter: @NickMurr.

Think back to civics class in the early years of your education. This is when most of us first learned about the fundamentals of American government: The Constitution, separation of powers, federalism and more. We were taught that while our system isn't perfect, it was constructed in a manner that diffuses power to protect against tyranny.

Despite the ideological factions that existed at our nation's founding, these ideas were something on which all could agree. History is replete with examples of tragedy when a single human wields too much power.

Now think about everything you witnessed your state government do over the last year, mostly by executive fiat: crushing lockdowns and economic restrictions that significantly hurt the average American's ability to earn a living and provide for their family.

Far from a forgotten civics lesson, millions of Americans learned firsthand how their government can completely upend their daily lives.

At the peak of state-ordered lockdowns in response to COVID-19, 316 million Americans across 42 states lived under a stay-at-home order. Businesses and places of worship were ordered closed. Millions lost their jobs and savings. Elective surgeries were canceled or delayed as thousands of cancer screenings and organ transplants went unperformed. All this, and we're barely scratching the surface of unintended consequences as a result of last year's pandemic policy.

Most rules we were told to follow were implemented by executive order under an emergency declaration. Few, if any, were subject to the deliberative scrutiny of our state legislatures. When courts were asked to intervene, many punted the issue back to legislatures, or in some cases, chief executives modified their rules in an attempt to nullify the pending litigation.

Perhaps you're wondering how a country built on individual liberty could fall so far from its founding ideals. How did our system of governance allow this to happen? Who watches the watchmen during an emergency?

As exhibited by the responses of many governors to the coronavirus pandemic, the truth is that the chief executive is too powerful in most states, specifically in emergency situations.

Here in Maine, we've seen Gov. Janet Mills continuously extend her emergency declaration and govern by edict for nearly a year, unilaterally dictating all public policy in our state.

But legislatures are the ultimate arbiter of public policy in every state. Under no circumstance should these bodies be sidelined for an entire year while a single human determines what actions are necessary to respond to an emergency. Citizens deserve a voice in every decision their government makes, and when legislatures are sidelined, the people effectively have no voice in their government anymore.

To be clear, I do not contend that Gov. Mills broke any state laws. Rather, the laws in place in Maine and the rest of the country are inadequate to maintain the right balance of power between the legislature and chief executive during emergencies. Our laws enabled the governor to wield power in the ways she did without legislative oversight or approval. That's not right, and it's something lawmakers around the country should examine following the pandemic.

It is possible to provide proper checks on executive power during an emergency without hampering a governor's ability to marshal an effective response. States should explore developing laws and procedures specific to handling a public health emergency, since most states' emergency laws were constructed to help them respond to a natural disaster or terrorist attack, not a pandemic.

Executive orders issued under an emergency should be narrowly tailored and challenges to these rules should receive expedited judicial review. Limiting the duration, applicability and scope of emergency orders would result in less unintended consequences, and promptly give those who feel they've been wronged by the government their day in court.

State legislatures should require governors to obtain their permission to extend an emergency declaration, as well as have the ability to nullify individual orders issued by a governor. This would allow the governor to respond in ways he or she feels is necessary while also giving lawmakers an avenue to check the governor if an order is onerous, arbitrary or exceeds the true scope of their emergency power.

These are reforms every state should consider as they try to make sense of everything that happened last year.

State governments should respect the rule of law and its separation of powers, even in emergency situations. Without balance, concentrated power in the hands of a few will most certainly bend toward tyranny.

EDITORIAL POLICY Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

Time for US to double down on at-home COVID testing

By DOUG BADGER
The Heritage Foundation

Doug Badger is a visiting fellow in Domestic Policy Studies at The Heritage Foundation.

California-based Innova Medical Group produces millions of COVID-19 tests every day — tests that people can perform at home and that yield results in minutes. These tests could transform the pandemic response and move us beyond the public health policy stalemate. Yet not one of them is available to Americans. Innova is exporting them to other countries because the FDA bans their distribution in the U.S.

"If the U.S. government today said, 'OK, go,' I could deliver 60 million tests before the end of February," Innova CEO Daniel Elliott told The Hill in a piece published Feb. 11.

Elliott believes that his company can produce 5 million tests daily by the end of February, or about 150 million per month.

By way of comparison, the U.S. performed a total of just over 58 million tests during January, an average of fewer than 1.9 million daily, according to data compiled by the COVID Tracking Project. That number could rise to the tens of millions if the FDA approved the Innova test and similar products developed by other companies.

The FDA justifies its inaction by noting that rapid, home-based tests — which detect antigens produced by the virus rather than the virus itself — are less sensitive than laboratory-based PCR tests. That lower sensitivity offers some advantages. PCR tests can return positive results in people long after they pose a danger of spreading the virus to others.

And while rapid tests are more likely than PCR tests to return false negatives, that is more than offset by their volume (tens of millions of tests per day), frequency (people could test themselves multiple times) and immediacy (they return results in minutes, rather than days).

Rapid tests can help solve the problem that masking and social distancing have not: an estimated one-third of COVID-19 cases are asymptomatic, yet those cases may account for more than one-half of transmissions. Millions of people risk spreading the disease because they don't know they have it.

Masks and distancing may reduce that risk, but they can't eliminate it. The runup in cases that began last fall in the U.S. and Europe occurred despite widespread mask-wearing.

CDC has never developed effective policies for identifying people who are infectious. Instead, they advise wearing a mask — or two—but have never devised an effective plan for what to do once people acquire the infection despite wearing masks.

Widespread use of rapid tests would be a critical feature of such a plan. It would replace ignorance with knowledge. Once people know they are carrying the pathogen, they can take appropriate steps to protect others.

The Biden administration has shown an openness to rapid tests but remains stymied by the FDA. The administration has contracted with a half dozen companies to buy rapid tests, though it hasn't disclosed which companies or whether their products have gained FDA approval.

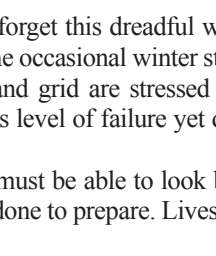
The FDA remains the major stumbling block. Biden's nominee for surgeon general, Dr. Vivek Murthy, recently told The New York Times that the government should begin "thinking more broadly" about COVID-19 testing.

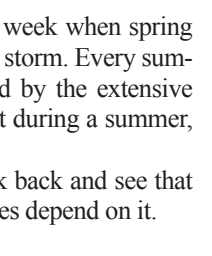
"If you really want to empower people in a moment like this," he said, "creating the kind of tests that people can utilize in their own homes would be a wonderful way to do that."

Rapid at-home tests offer a new and promising policy direction. They are a complement to vaccines and a fail-safe if variants arise that the vaccines don't prevent.

Instead of doubling down — literally — on masks, the government should pursue better ways of fighting the pandemic. Liberating and equipping Americans to use rapid at-home tests is the best place to start.

Schools need more help to reopen safely





By VICTORIA JACKSON and NICHOLAS JOHNSON
Progressive Media Project

Victoria Jackson is Senior Policy Analyst and Nicholas Johnson is Senior Vice President for State Fiscal Policy, both at the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. This column was produced for the Progressive Media Project, which is run by The Progressive *magazine, and distributed by Tribune News Service.*

The COVID-19 relief bill being considered by Congress would provide schools with $130 billion in new flexible funds, the largest one-time federal investment in K-12 education in U.S. history.

Schools need this money to support students through distance learning, safely resume in-person instruction, help with students' socio-emotional issues, and let them catch up on the studies they missed during the pandemic. It would be a big step toward supporting students and educators at a critical time.

But states, too, must step up to the task by addressing long-standing educational challenges that the pandemic has compounded. They must make their own investments in K-12 education, supported by tax increases as needed, to improve education for all children by funding schools adequately and equitably.

COVID-19 has created enormous financial problems for schools. The state and local tax revenues that fund schools are barely adequate even in the best of times; now they've fallen due to the drop in economic activity, causing cuts to staffing and teacher pay.

Operating in-person schools safely will require investments in personal protective equipment, custodial staff, HVAC systems and additional transportation costs, among other things. Just for the current school year, schools could need up to $12.6 billion for items like plexiglass shields and hand sanitizer, $12.7 billion for custodial staff time and $19 billion for transportation. And schools will undoubtedly need to extend some costs into the next school year.

In addition, closing the digital divide to ensure that all students and teachers have access to needed devices and connectivity will cost up to $12 billion over 12 months, plus up to $6 billion for each additional year. While many schools have already diverted money toward these costs during the pandemic, more is needed to narrow this gap as in-person learning resumes.

Many schools will need to add teachers or portable classrooms to reduce class sizes to meet social distancing guidelines. A 10% increase in staffing over the next year would cost schools $35 billion.

A quarter of schools lack a school nurse, and most schools lack the counseling support needed to help students navigate the mental health challenges of returning to school. Adding needed nurses and counselors will cost several billion dollars per year.

Most significantly, schools will need to lengthen the school day or school year and hire tutors to support the kids whose learning has fallen behind the most, at a potential cost of up to $100 billion per year.

These costs will further strain a public education system that's already inadequately and inequitably funded. Many school districts never recovered from the layoffs they imposed due to funding cuts during and after the Great Recession in 2008.

When COVID-19 hit, schools overall were employing 77,000 fewer teachers and other workers even though they were educating 1.5 million more children. Moreover, funding levels are lowest for schools that serve the greatest shares of students from low-income families and students of color, even though inadequate funding hurts the education of those students the most.

Money matters in education. Adequate school funding helps raise high school completion rates, close achievement gaps and increase the productivity of the future workforce by boosting student performance.

Our children and our schools need more than a return to a pre-COVID-19 "normal" that left many students behind.

Congress may soon take a big step to help meet those challenges, but states must do the same: by generating more tax revenue to better fund schools and targeting aid to schools educating the greatest share of low-income students, students with disabilities and English language learners.

LITERARY NOOK

By BOB COLDEEN
Special to the Saipan Tribune

Bob Coldeen is a longtime TV journalist in the CNMI and is news director/reporter of KSPN 2.

BBQ Boaster

Please no propane for this island boy.
A stainless steel gasser isn't my toy.
And you won't see Weber at my house.
You can call me a down-to-earth spouse.

No Kingsford necessary for this primitive son.
No manufactured pellets to get my grillin' done.
The virtues of Big Green Egg are well-known.
Could even smoke meat in a tropical cyclone.

Coconuts and *tangan-tangan* are all I need
To get a natural barbecue up to speed.
See, I like to get down on the ground,
Down where animal spirits lurk around.

Squatting over friendly fire loosens my loins
As I char lovely, succulent tenderloins.
Ribs, fish, hot dogs, chicken and chops,
I've to got to say my cookout is tops.

Because as I bring in a hearty meal for family
I hear animal spirits calling out to me,
"Thank you for respecting our sacrifice.
You are where it's at."
Animal spirits thanked me nice.
How many grillers can say that?

TEXAS

From Page 10

The blame game is already falling into predictable narratives. On the right, the problem is too much reliance on renewable energy. On the left, it's privatization, Republican leadership and a failure to anticipate the effects of climate change. There's some truth in most of it, but the focus needs to be on specific actions that were not taken, who's responsible for them and how to prevent them from happening again. Solve specific problems rather than railing at huge ones.

It seems apparent that power generators haven't done enough to winterize their plants, so shutdowns and failures kicked in just when the power was needed most. That extends to renewables, too, as wind turbines froze over. Natural gas transmission has been a problem as well.

These are big, but fixable, problems. The Legislature must dig in to identify the specifics and then act accordingly. A law enacted in 2011 gave the Public Utility Commission power to require generators to report on their abnormal weather preparations and file an emergency plan. Has that been done, and if preparations were inadequate, why didn't anyone step in? Perhaps regulators need more enforcement teeth. That's always a tough sell in Texas, but it's clear these companies need a nudge, and perhaps help paying the bills.

It'll be all too easy to forget this dreadful week when spring arrives. But it's not just the occasional winter storm. Every summer, our power supply and grid are stressed by the extensive heat. We haven't seen this level of failure yet during a summer, but it's coming.

When it does, Texans must be able to look back and see that everything possible was done to prepare. Lives depend on it.

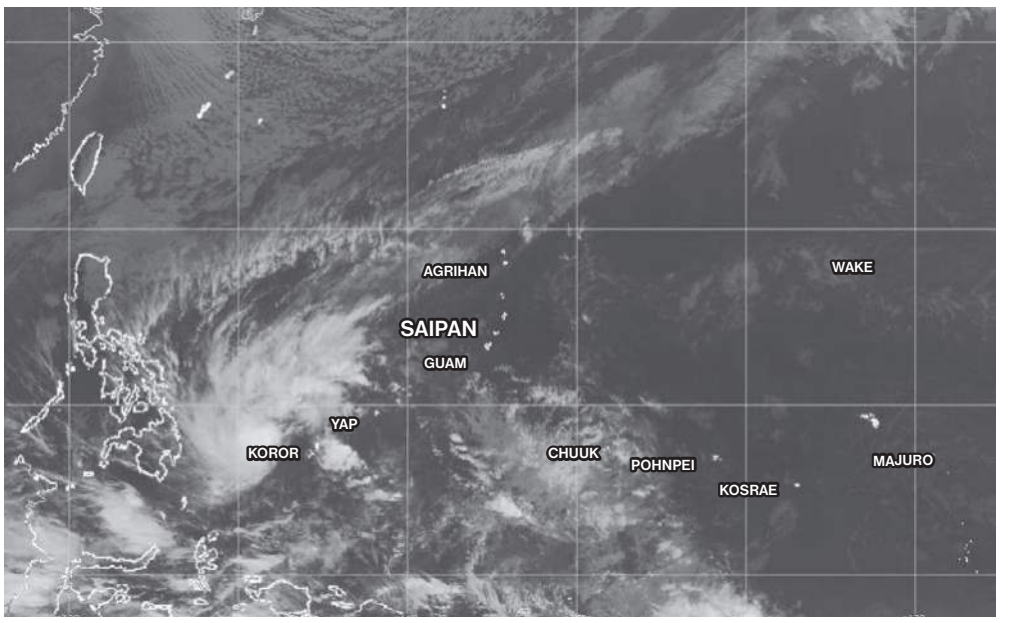
© 2021 *Fort Worth Star-Telegram*

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated light showers. East winds 10 to 15 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
86º 76º	86º 76º	87º 77º	87º 77º	86º 76º

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:09 AM, THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2021

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Easterly winds prevail over the Marianas this morning. Satellite imagery shows only a few showers over the area.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲ ▼ °F	
Guam and Rota	Showers	86º / 77º
Palau	Thunderstorm	85º / 77º
Yap	Thunderstorm	85º / 78º
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	84º / 79º
Pohnpei	Thunderstorm	84º / 78º
Kosrae	Thunderstorm	84º / 78º
Majuro	Thunderstorm	84º / 80º

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:39 AM	6:22 PM
Saturday	6:39 AM	6:22 PM
Sunday	6:38 AM	6:22 PM
Monday	6:38 AM	6:22 PM
Tuesday	6:37 AM	6:23 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	11:25 AM	-	-
Saturday	-	12:27 AM	12:06 PM
Sunday	-	1:18 AM	12:50 PM
Monday	-	2:10 AM	1:39 PM
Tuesday	-	3:04 AM	2:31 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE	▲ ▼ °F	
Auckland	Showers	73º / 64º
Beijing	Mostly Sunny	45º / 23º
Hong Kong	Mostly Cloudy	73º / 66º
Honolulu	Showers	80º / 69º
London	Cloudy	50º / 41º
Los Angeles	Partly Cloudy	62º / 44º
Manila	Partly Cloudy	91º / 75º
Melbourne	Mostly Sunny	90º / 66º
Miami	Partly Cloudy	80º / 74º
New York	Showers	48º / 44º
Osaka	Mostly Sunny	52º / 36º
Paris	Partly Cloudy	50º / 37º
Busan	Sunny	52º / 30º
Rome	Partly Cloudy	57º / 43º
Salem	Cloudy	79º / 60º
San Francisco	Mostly Sunny	52º / 38º
Seoul	Mostly Sunny	43º / 23º
Tokyo	Mostly Sunny	52º / 36º
Washington, DC	Showers	51º / 49º

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY	FEET	
12:57 AM	High Tide	1.23
6:20 AM	Low Tide	0.81
12:11 PM	High Tide	1.51
7:39 PM	Low Tide	0.27

STOP THE SPREAD

The Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. continue to encourage residents within the Marianas to practice social distancing, which means avoiding close contact with people in order to avoid catching the virus yourself and to avoid passing it on to others.

- Stay home as much as possible. Avoid unnecessary travel or public places.
- Avoid social gatherings in groups of more than 10.
- Choose drive-thru, take-out, or delivery options, or outdoor seating, if available, when dining in.
- Send only one healthy adult from the household run necessary errands, such as getting groceries or picking up medications. Leave children, elderly, and other vulnerable people at home as much as possible. When returning home from an errand, wash your hands before doing anything else.
- Older adults and people with chronic medical conditions are at higher risk of getting very sick from this illness. People at high risk should stay at home as much as possible.
- Create a household plan of action, https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/checklisthousehold-ready.html
- Ensure a 30-day supply of all medicines.

Continue good hand hygiene

- Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds with soap and water, avoid touching your face, cover coughs and sneezes with a tissue or your sleeve.
- Use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer if soap and water are not readily available.

Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if you become symptomatic

- Stay home when you are sick and if you recently traveled to a place with COVID-19. Self-quarantine means:
- ❑ Choosing a room in your house that can be used to separate sick household members from others.
- ❑ Washing your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer.
- ❑ Avoiding touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- ❑ Limiting visitors

CHCC appreciates the patience and understanding of the community at this time. To obtain general information about the CNMI COVID-19 response, contact the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force Hotline at 287-0046, 287-0489, 287-1089. These numbers are available Monday to Sunday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For medical information about COVID-19, reach out to the COVID-19 Infoline at the following numbers: 285-1672/1352. These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30pm.

For mental health support and helpful tips during a crisis, call the Mental Health Support Line at 285-1856, 323-6560, 323-6561 These numbers are available Monday to Friday, 7:30am - 4:30 pm. For the 24/7 Disaster Distress Helpline, call SAMSHA at 1-800-985-5990.

For more information about DIY face coverings, visit https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prevent-getting-sick/cloth-face-cover.html

For more information about CHCC programs, follow CHCC on Facebook, Instagram, Twitter at @cnmichcc, check out our website at www.chcc.gov.mp or call us at (670) 234-8950.

For more information on the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force, visit www.governor.gov.mpand, follow @GovernorCNMI on Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter.

This health advisory may be found online at http://www.chcc.gov.mp/pressrelease.html and at www.governor.gov.mp/covid-19.

Rumor control

During crises like this, oftentimes the spread of misinformation is just as dangerous as the virus itself. The CNMI is reminded to only share official and verified notices, press releases, and advisories from the Governor's COVID-19 Task Force and CHCC.

Source: Office of the Governor

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E-mail: sales@saipantribune.com

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF FEBRUARY 1, 2021

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA117	6:55am	7:35am	1, 6
UA117	7:00am	7:40am	4

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

UA117/183	6:55am	9:50pm	1 via Guam

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

UA183	8:00pm	9:50pm	1, 3, 5

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	5:10am	5:51am	1, 6
UA174	5:15am	5:56am	4

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA184/174	10:55pm	5:56am+1	3 via Guam
UA184/174	10:40pm	5:51am+1	5 via Guam

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA184	10:40pm	4:30am+1	5
UA184	10:55pm	4:40am+1	1, 3

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 9, 2021

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1301	8:30AM	9:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
1302	11:00AM	11:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
1303	3:30PM	4:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3101	9:30AM	10:00AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri
3102	12:00AM	12:30AM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sat
3103	4:30PM	5:00PM	Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri/Sun

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
3401	12:15	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
4301	13:00	13:30	Temporarily Unavailable

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
1201	7:00	7:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1202	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	10:00	10:15	Daily
1205	11:00	11:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1206	12:00	12:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1207	13:00	13:15	Temporarily Unavailable
1208	14:00	14:15	Daily
1209	15:00	15:15	Daily
1210	16:00	16:15	Daily
1211	17:00	17:15	Daily
1212	17:00	17:15	Temporarily Unavailable

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	DEPARTURE	ARRIVAL	FREQUENCY
2101	7:30	7:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2102	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	10:30	10:45	Daily
2105	11:30	11:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2106	12:30	12:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2107	13:30	13:45	Temporarily Unavailable
2108	14:30	14:45	Daily
2109	15:30	15:45	Daily
2110	16:30	16:45	Daily
2111	17:30	17:45	Daily
2112	18:30	18:45	Temporarily Unavailable

Homes in southern part of Saipan receive house numbers

By JUSTINE NAUTA
justine_nauta@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The house numbering program under the Saipan Mayor's Office has already given numbers to houses and establishments in the most southern part of the island.

According to Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang, they have completed assigning numbers to houses and establishments in Koblerville, parts of San Vicente, Chalan Kanoa, and Susupe. They are now working in Dan Dan and remaining areas in San Vicente.

Apatang said that when they are done in both villages, they will go back to the previous villages to check the houses that were missed because they were not home.

While everything is going great, Apatang said they have also been running into problems with some villages because some of the properties are subdivided or not recorded, which needs to be corrected. Each house and establishment will receive a letter, number, and street name on it.

It was learned that those who live in a compound will get the same number ending with A, B, C, D, etc. In the case of San Antonio Church, there are three buildings on one property such as the priest's house, the social hall and church, and the sisters and nuns' house. This means that each building will get the number, 3657, with a letter A, B, and C at the end. This will help people, or postal services, identify each building.

In a previous interview with project manager Lee Tenorio, he said the home numbering system will be most beneficial for first responders when they need to assist in any emergency.

This project requires sending out people to every home and assigning numbers to each home. They will be giving homeowners a letter that gives them their street address and number and some samples that shows them how to put up the numbers on their houses or home units.

The house number that the homeowner will then affix to their house will be a minimum of 4 inches in height and up to 6 inches, with a thickness that is more than 3/8-inch. Owners would have to comply with these specifications set for the posting of the new addresses so that people passing by from the road could see the number, even if the house or the building is a few feet away from the road.

Apatang assures that they have people working on the house numbering program every day and hopes to see the program completed by the end of the year.

Leong, Lizama named to RTI dean's list

ROCHESTER, NY—Giselle Ivy Leong and Jessa Lyn Lizama, who are both from Saipan and are in the graphic design program at the Rochester Institute of Technology, have been named to the dean's list for for the 2020 fall semester.

Undergraduate students are eligible for dean's list if their GPA is greater than or equal to 3.40 for nine credit hours of traditionally graded coursework; they do not have any grades of "Incomplete," NE, D, or F; and they have registered for, and completed, at least 12 credit hours.

Founded in 1829, RIT enrolls about 18,600 students in more than 200 career-oriented and professional programs, making it among the largest private universities in the United States. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

A new board for Friends of the Mariana Trench

The year 2021 promises to be an exciting year for the Friends of the Mariana Trench, which will be overseeing its various projects and grant-funded activities through a newly seated board of directors, including incoming chair and treasurer Rep. Sheila J. Babauta (D-Saipan) and incoming vice chair Franco Santos, as well as returning member and secretary Dr. Larisa Ford.

Santos

Babauta

The Friends of the Mariana Trench is delighted to bring such talented leadership onboard and look forward to collaborating on projects that promote environmental conservation in the Marianas community.

FOMT thanks and commends the service of its retiring board members: Edson Limes, who offered invaluable insight to the Friends as a cultural practitioner and fisherman, and former chairman and treasurer Ike Cabrera.

FOMT also recognizes Cabrera's 14 years of devotion to the FOMT as chairman and founder. Under his leadership, FOMT were able to achieve its many ambitious goals, including incorporating as a nonprofit, campaigning for the Mariana Trench Marine National Monument and, most recently, launching the first session of the Administration for Native Americans grant-funded Project HOPE: Healthy Oceans & People Empowerment.

"Mr. Limes and Mr. Cabrera will be sorely missed, but the Friends look forward to their continued participation in everyday stewardship and hope they will avail of FOMT's exciting upcoming programs and services for the ocean-minded community," said the group in a press statement.

The FOMT board will be working alongside executive director Laurie Peterka to fulfill its mission: to inspire and influence ocean stewardship in the region by providing opportunities for the world, community, and especially the youth to learn about ocean conservation and the Mariana Trench Marine National Mon-

DONATED FACE MASKS CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Tzu Chi Foundation donated 6,000 face masks to the Joeten-Kiyu Public Library last Feb. 4, 2021. Library director Erlinda C. Naputi thanked the foundation for making this generous donation. "We humbly thank the Tzu Chi Foundation…for reaching out and supporting your Joeten-Kiyu Public Library especially during our time of need. Face masks can help reduce the spread of the Covid-19 virus and save lives."

The Saipan Cares for Animals facility in As Gonno. CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

SCA is looking for a new home

As many of our supporters know, Saipan Cares for Animals was recently part of a recent Zoning Board public hearing to approve the conditional use application for our property.

It was an oversight on our part that the zoning application was not fully completed and approved when we moved our clinic to As Gonno five years ago.

At the meeting, we found out that our property is located in a rural commercial zoning district, rather than a residential commercial district as we had thought. Businesses in rural commercial areas are required to operate on a lot that is at least 4,000 square meters and, even with the most generous allowance under the law, our lot is still significantly too small.

The Zoning Board, after hearing comments from our team and supporters, tabled the vote on our conditional use permit. They allowed us until Aug. 1, 2021, to collect more information and possibly attempt to expand the lot so we could come into compliance. We would like to thank the Zoning Board for their support and their decision to allow us to continue operating while we work to bring our business into compliance.

We would also like to thank everyone who attended the meeting to voice their support for SCA, with special thanks to Rep. Sheila Babauta (D-Saipan), Rep. Leila Staffler (D-Saipan), and Aria and Grace Keilbach from Boonie Babies for their comments. We would also like to thank Delegate Gregorio Kilili Sablan (Ind-MP) for his letter of support, which was read aloud at the meeting.

However, after considering all factors in the situation, we have made the difficult decision to move SCA to a new location.

We need your help! We are just starting to look for possible locations for the new SCA clinic, and there are a lot of costs associated with moving our operation including rent for a new space, building new kennels, and the teardown of our current facilities so that we can leave our As Gonno property in good condition when we move.

We have started a new fundraising campaign to help offset as much of the cost as we can and hopefully avoid any interruptions in our services: GoFundMe.com/scadonate. Please donate if you are able, any amount helps!

We would like to give special thanks to Velma Lore, who has allowed us to lease her property at no cost for the last five years. She is an important part of the reason that SCA exists at all, and we will never be able to thank her enough for her part in furthering our mission to improve the lives of dogs and cats in the CNMI.

No matter what happens, we are committed to keeping our doors open and saving every dog and cat that we can. We will be posting regular updates to our blog and GoFundMe to keep our supporters in the Marianas and around the world updated. Despite the challenges we are facing, we know that our community will have our back during this difficult time and we are excited for the possibilities moving forward!

- Learn more about Saipan Cares for Animals at saipancaresforanimals.com
- Subscribe to our blog at saipancaresforanimals.com/blog
- Donate to our Save SCA GoFundMe campaign at gofundme.com/scadonate
- Follow us on Facebook (@saipancares) and Instagram (@saipancares670) ***(PR)***

3 Dickinson U students named to honors list

Mark Samuel Merante and Daryll Navarro, both from Saipan, have been named to the honors lists at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Florham Campus for the fall 2020 semester.

Lima Li, also of Saipan, a student at the university's Metropolitan Campus in Teaneck, New Jersey, has also been named to the honors list.

To qualify for the honors list, a student must carry a 3.5 or better grade point average out of a possible 4.0 and be enrolled in a minimum of 12 letter-graded hours (four courses).

Fairleigh Dickinson University is New Jersey's largest private university. Its Florham Campus is located on the former Vanderbilt-Twombly estate in suburban Morris County. Its Metropolitan campus is located in Teaneck, New Jersey. ***(Saipan Tribune)***

Business

Latte Built Gym teams up with local restaurants

By BEA CABRERA
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CORRESPONDENT

Latte Built Gym Saipan together with selected local restaurants aim for the same cause—to provide the community healthy meals and ultimately create a healthy lifestyle on Saipan. Latte Built Gym owner and health and fitness professional trainer Derek Cutting, or Coach D, came up with the idea.

"The collaboration between my gym and the restaurants is called 'Loyalty Built X Local Restaurant Collab' and I started this for two reasons—— To give our community access to a guaranteed healthy meal at most of their favorite restaurants and second, to help promote small businesses on island to work together and collaborate for a good cause especially during the pandemic and difficult economic climate," he said.

"The restaurants that are part of this collab are The Shack, Everest Kitchen, Caravan of Food, Ina's Kitchen, Poki Yaki, Naked Fish, Godfather's Bar & Grill, The Hut, Salty's Bar & Grill, and Garapan Restaurant and more restaurants will be added soon," he added.

Cutting said that the meals at each location are all made of clean and low-calorie ingredients and to identify a restaurant that is part of the collaboration, a sign that says "Coach D Approved Meals" is visible upon entry. "High protein and veggies are the majority of the calories in each dish. However, every restaurant present this kind of meal in a dish that they created for this collaboration. Ina's Kitchen, for example, offers a Latte Built taco, Poki Yaki offers a fresh Poki bowl... Each meal was built with a healthy clean set of ingredients but also stayed in line with the overall theme and culture of each particular restaurant."

For more information, call Latte Built Oleai at (670) 235-2265 or Latte Built Kagman at (670) 488-2265.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
Latte Built owner and professional trainer Derek Cutting and his family live a healthy and active lifestyle and wants the community to have the same goals.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
The "Coach D Approved Meal" sign is visible at all participating restaurants around Saipan.

"I didn't want to get into any particular 'diet type' with these meals. That's why they are called 'Coach D approved'... I've taken all my years as a professional trainer as well as my competitive bodybuilding experience and sort of picked the good qualities from all the 'fad diets' but also keeping nutrition well rounded… Each restaurant has at least one set dish, some offer a few options for example Garapan restaurant has three different 'Latte Built Coach D Approved Meal' options." he added.

There is an added feature in this collaboration as anyone who purchase the meals qualifies for the Latte Built Rewards Program. "When someone eats the 'Latte Built Coach D Approved Meal, he or she will receive a stamp card. When 10 stamps are achieved, this will qualify the holder a special prize that they can claim at Latte Built… We started on Feb. 15 and this is not a promotion as this is a never-ending collaborative program," Cutting said.

"Prizes will change often but this initial starting prize is one month of free membership at Latte Built," he added.

For more information, call Latte Built Oleai at (670) 235-2265 or Latte Built Kagman at (670) 488-2265.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO
A sample of the "Coach D Approved Meal" that is available at Salty's Bar & Grill in Garapan.

Biden's $15 wage proposal: Job killer or a boon for workers?

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden's effort to raise the federal minimum wage to $15 an hour could provide a welcome opportunity for someone like Cristian Cardona, a 21-year-old fast food worker. Cardona would love to earn enough to afford to move out of his parents' house in Orlando, Florida, and maybe scrape together money for college.

More than 1,000 miles away in Detroit, Nya Marshall worries that a $15 minimum wage would drive up her labor costs and perhaps force her to close her 2-year-old restaurant, already under strain from the viral pandemic.

Between Cardona's hope and Marshall's fear lies a roiling public debate, one with enormous consequences for American workers and businesses. Will the Biden administration succeed in enacting a much higher federal minimum wage—and should it? Economists have argued the merits of minimum wage hikes for years.

"The mother of all economic debates" is how economists Michael Feroli and Daniel Silver of JPMorgan Chase describe it.

The administration has cast its campaign to raise the minimum as a way to lift up millions of the working poor, reduce America's vast financial inequality and help boost the economy.

"No American should work full time and live in poverty," said Rosemary Boeglin, a White House spokeswoman. "Research has shown that raising the minimum wage reduces poverty and has positive economic benefits for workers, their families, their communities, and local businesses where they spend those additional dollars."

Yet just this month, the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that while raising the minimum wage to $15 by 2025 would increase pay for 17 million people and pull 900,000 out of poverty, it would also end 1.4 million jobs. The reasoning is that employers would cut jobs to make up for their higher labor costs.

Lawmakers to face off with GameStop saga's key players

WASHINGTON (AP)—The GameStop saga has been portrayed as a victory of the little guy over Wall Street giants but not everyone agrees, including some lawmakers in Washington.

GameStop shares soared 1,600% in January before falling back to earth. Entangled in the drama are massive short-selling hedge funds, a social media message board and ordinary investors wanting in on the hottest new trade, among others. The House Financial Services Committee is ready to dig into the confounding episode at a hearing on Thursday.

The players include a swaggering 34-year-old YouTube personality and GameStop evangelist; one of the richest and most prominent investment tycoons; and the CEO of the online platform Robinhood that hosted a tsunami of speculative GameStop trading but faced intense criticism for restricting trading at the height of the frenzy.

The CEO, Vlad Tenev, is denying speculation from some lawmakers that Robinhood acted to favor its big Wall Street clients when it blocked customers on Jan. 28 from buying shares of GameStop and a dozen other companies. The restrictions lasted in some form for days.

The accusation is that Robinhood changed the rules of the road midway through to favor big clients that stood to lose money if GameStop shares kept rising.

"Any allegation that Robinhood acted to help hedge funds or other special interests to the detriment of our customers is absolutely false and market-distorting rhetoric," Tenev says in written testimony prepared for the hearing. "Our customers are our top priority."

Tenev reiterated Robinhood's position that it imposed the trading restrictions solely to meet capital requirements set by regulators.

As they question Tenev and other witnesses, lawmakers and regulators will look for answers about what the GameStop trading frenzy says about the fault lines and potential conflicts in the structure of the market that can hurt unsophisticated investors.

The online GameStop booster, Keith Gill, who goes by Roaring Kitty, plans to tell the lawmakers that he reaped a profit on his investment because he did his homework on the company, and not because he touted the stock to "unwitting investors," according to his prepared remarks.

STOCK PORTFOLIO

LEADING INDICATORS

S&P	DOW	NASDAQ
3,920.25	31,534.00	13,629.00
-7.75	-15.00	-70.75
-0.20%	-0.05%	-0.52%

EXCHANGE RATES
In U.S. dollar terms

Australian Dollar	1.29	Hong Kong Dollar	7.75	Russian Ruble	73.72
British Pound	0.722	Indian Rupee	72.83	Singapore Dollar	1.33
Canadian Dollar	1.27	Japanese Yen	105.87	South Korean Won	1107.41
Chinese Yuan	6.46	Malaysian Ringgit	4.04	Swiss Franc	0.90
Euro	0.8307	New Zealand Dollar	1.39	Taiwan Dollar	27.99
		Philippine Peso	48.45	Thailand Baht	30.01

Nation

Thousands of service members saying no to COVID-19 vaccine

AP
In this Feb. 9, 2021 photo provided by the Department of Defense, Hickam 15th Medical Group host the first COVID-19 mass vaccination on Joint Base Pearl Harbor-Hickam.

WASHINGTON (AP)—By the thousands, U.S. service members are refusing or putting off the COVID-19 vaccine as frustrated commanders scramble to knock down internet rumors and find the right pitch that will persuade troops to get the shot.

Some Army units are seeing as few as one-third agree to the vaccine. Military leaders searching for answers believe they have identified one potential convincer: an imminent deployment. Navy sailors on ships heading out to sea last week, for example, were choosing to take the shot at rates exceeding 80% to 90%.

Air Force Maj. Gen. Jeff Taliaferro, vice director of operations for the Joint Staff, told Congress on Wednesday that "very early data" suggests that just up to two-thirds of the service members offered the vaccine have accepted.

That's higher than the rate for the general population, which a recent survey by the Kaiser Family Foundation put at roughly 50%. But the significant number of forces declining the vaccine is especially worrisome because troops often live, work and fight closely together in environments where social distancing and wearing masks, at times, are difficult.

The military's resistance also comes as troops are deploying to administer shots at vaccination centers around the country and as leaders look to American forces to set an example for the nation.

"We're still struggling with what is the messaging and how do we influence people to opt in for the vaccine," said Brig. Gen. Edward Bailey, the surgeon for Army Forces Command. He said that in some units just 30% have agreed to take the vaccine, while others are between 50% and 70%. Forces Command oversees major Army units, encompassing about 750,000 Army, Reserve and National Guard soldiers at 15 bases.

At Fort Bragg, North Carolina, where several thousand troops are preparing for future deployments, the vaccine acceptance rate is about 60%, Bailey said. That's "not as high as we would hope for front-line personnel," he said.

Bailey has heard all the excuses.

"I think the most amusing one I heard was, 'The Army always tells me what to do, they gave me a choice, so I said no'," he said.

Service leaders have vigorously campaigned for the vaccine. They have held town halls, written messages to the force, distributed scientific data, posted videos, and even put out photos of leaders getting vaccinated.

For weeks, the Pentagon insisted it did not know how many troops were declining the vaccine. On Wednesday they provided few details on their early data.

Officials from individual military services, however, said in interviews with The Associated Press that refusal rates vary widely, depending on a service member's age, unit, location, deployment status and other intangibles.

The variations make it harder for leaders to identify which arguments for the vaccine are most persuasive. The Food and Drug Administration has allowed emergency use of the vaccine, so it's voluntary. But Defense Department officials say they hope that soon may change.

"We cannot make it mandatory yet," Vice Adm. Andrew Lewis, commander of the Navy's 2nd Fleet, said last week. "I can tell you we're probably going to make it mandatory as soon as we can, just like we do with the flu vaccine."

About 40 Marines gathered recently in a California conference room for an information session from medical staff. One officer, who was not authorized to publicly discuss private conversations and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Marines are more comfortable posing questions about the vaccine in smaller groups.

The officer said one Marine, citing a widely circulated and false conspiracy theory, said: "I heard that this thing is actually a tracking device." The medical staff, said the officer, quickly debunked that theory, and pointed to the Marine's cellphone, noting that it's an effective tracker.

Other frequent questions revolved around possible side effects or health concerns, including for pregnant women. Army, Navy and Air Force officials say they hear much the same.

Muddled promises on schools pose political problem for Biden

WASHINGTON (AP)—President Joe Biden is in a political firestorm over how and when to get more schools open amid the coronavirus pandemic, with Republicans seizing on confusion surrounding Biden's goal to reopen a majority of schools within his first 100 days to paint the president as beholden to teachers' unions at the expense of American families.

His administration in recent weeks has sent muddled and at times contradictory messages about Biden's goal. On Tuesday night, the president said his 100-day goal was to have most elementary schools open five days a week, seeming to conflict with his own press secretary, who had said last week that schools would be considered "open" if they held in-person classes even one day a week.

Biden's aides dismiss the controversy as a flareup that will disappear once the coronavirus is better under control and more school districts reopen, pointing to recent polls suggesting the public so far believes Biden is doing a good job in handling the issue.

But there could be lingering damage if Biden is seen to break an early promise on an issue so important to so many Americans.

Teachers' unions have said they support reopening schools once officials are able to make the buildings safer, but they need the $130 billion included in Biden's proposed American Rescue Plan to make it happen. And even if the bill passes Congress by the Democrats' mid-March deadline, it's unclear whether districts would be able to make changes in time to hasten school openings before the end of Biden's first 100 days.

Dan Domenech, executive director of the School Superintendents Association, said teachers are willing to go back to in-person learning "only if this bill is passed, only if the dollars get to the school districts in time for them to be able to do the work that they need to do in terms of spacing, in terms of sanitizing, and only if we get the majority of our teachers vaccinated."

"It's possible. But at this stage, at this point, it's not probable," he said.

American Federation of Teachers President Randi Weingarten said in an interview she hopes Biden will meet his goal, and has said teachers should return to school when COVID-19 mitigation strategies are in place. But she noted that with social distancing, school still won't feel normal.

"You're not going to be able to have every single child in every single school in the normal way that we think about normal school," she said.

Until the nation reaches herd immunity with the widespread distribution of the vaccine, Weingarten said, "we're not going to be normal."

This leaves Biden caught between teachers' unions expressing caution towards his expanded goal on reopening, and critics who say just one day of classroom time a week for a majority of schools is far too little. Data from Burbio, a service that tracks school opening plans, recently reported that 66% of K-12 students already are learning in-person to some degree.

Republicans have been using the issue to hit at Democrats for weeks, pointing to data suggesting that many schools are safe to open now and charging that the Biden administration is siding with teachers' unions over science and the needs of American families.

Power outages linger for millions as another icy storm looms

AUSTIN, Texas (AP)—Millions of Americans endured another frigid day without electricity or heat in the aftermath of a deadly winter storm as utility crews raced to restore power before another blast of snow and ice sowed more chaos in places least equipped to deal with it.

Nearly 3.4 million customers around the U.S. were still without electricity, and some also lost water service. Texas officials ordered 7 million people—a quarter of the population of the nation's second-largest state—to boil tap water before drinking it following days of record low temperatures that damaged infrastructure and froze pipes.

The latest storm front was certain to complicate recovery efforts, especially in states that are unaccustomed to such weather—parts of Texas, Arkansas and the Lower Mississippi Valley.

"There's really no letup to some of the misery people are feeling across that area," said Bob Oravec, lead forecaster with the National Weather Service, referring to Texas.

The system was forecast to move into the Northeast on Thursday. More than 100 million people live in areas covered by some type of winter weather warning, watch or advisory, the weather service said.

This week's extreme weather has been blamed for the deaths of more than 30 people, some of whom perished while struggling to keep warm inside their homes. In the Houston area, one family succumbed to carbon monoxide from car exhaust in their garage. Another family died while using a fireplace to keep warm.

Weather-related outages have been particularly stubborn in Oregon, where some customers have been without power for almost a week.

The worst U.S. outages by far have been in Texas, where 3 million homes and businesses remained without power as of midday Wednesday. More than 200,000 additional customers were in the dark in four Appalachian states, and nearly that many in the Pacific Northwest, according to poweroutage.us, which tracks utility outage reports.

Asia

Mass anti-coup protests in Myanmar as UN warns of crackdown

YANGON, Myanmar (AP)—Tens of thousands of demonstrators flooded the streets of Myanmar's biggest city Wednesday, in one of largest protests yet of a coup, despite warnings from a U.N. human rights expert that recent troop movements could indicate the military was planning a violent crackdown.

In Yangon, protesters marched carrying signs calling for ousted leader Aung San Suu Kyi to be released from detention, while others feigned car trouble, strategically abandoning their vehicles—and leaving the hoods up—to prevent security forces from easily accessing the demonstrations. Large rallies were also held in the country's second-biggest city, Mandalay, and the capital of Naypyitaw, in defiance of an order banning gatherings of five or more people.

One motorist, who spoke on condition of anonymity because he feared being targeted, explained tongue-in-cheek that his car had broken down "due to the suffering that our people are undergoing now. We just stopped the cars here on the road to show that we do not want the military regime."

The demonstrations came a day after U.N. rapporteur Tom Andrews expressed alarm at reports of soldiers being transported into Yangon, noting that such movements had previously preceded killings, disappearances and mass arrests.

"I am terrified that given the confluence of these two developments—planned mass protests and troops converging—we could be on the precipice of the military committing even greater crimes against the people of Myanmar," he said in a statement issued by the U.N. Human Rights office in Geneva.

By Wednesday evening, there had been no reports of major violence at the protests.

However, residents of Mandalay reported hearing gunshots about an hour after the start of the nightly curfew at 8 p.m. as dozens of police and soldiers roamed a neighborhood with housing for state railway workers.

There have been similar reports of gunshots and other aggressive actions in several cities since last week—apparently part of attempts to intimate people rather than cause injury. Railway workers could be targets because they have declared their support for the protest movement and carried out work stoppages.

The military seized power on Feb. 1, the day newly elected parliamentarians were supposed to take their seats—a shocking backslide for a country that had been taking tentative steps toward democracy. The junta said the takeover was necessary because Suu Kyi's government had failed to investigate fraud claims in elections her party won in a landslide; the election commission has dismissed those claims.

AP

Demonstrators gather in an intersection close to Sule Pagoda to protest against the military coup in Yangon, Myanmar Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021.

The high protest turnout came a day after junta leaders had declared that the demonstrations were dying down—and Kyi Pyar, a former lawmaker from Suu Kyi's party, said that dismissal only served to spur on the resistance.

"This upset the people," she said. "We are not weak, we will never step back in the fight against the military regime. So we are back on the street again."

In Naypyitaw, thousands of people, including private bank employees and engineers, marched down the city's wide boulevards, chanting for the release of Suu Kyi and President Win Myint.

Protesters also poured into the streets of Mandalay, where earlier in the week security forces pointed guns at demonstrators and attacked them with slingshots and sticks. Local media reported that several people were injured.

The marches have been organized as part of a civil disobedience movement, spearheaded by medical workers and supported by many civil servants.

Police filed a new charge against Suu Kyi, her lawyer said Tuesday, a move likely to keep her under house arrest and further fuel public anger. It was the second charge against Suu Kyi—the first for illegally possessing walkie-talkies, the second for an alleged violation of coronavirus restrictions—both apparent attempts to provide a legal veneer for her detention.

State television also announced charges Wednesday against several prominent entertainers, including actors and directors, who have all been publicly supportive of the protests against the coup. They were charged under a law that penalizes those who act in a manner intended to hinder or prevent members of the military and government employees from carrying out their duties.

The entertainers were apparently accused of inducing civil servants to walk off the job—and the move reflects the junta's concern about the widespread and increasing involvement of civil servants in the protests.

On Tuesday night, the military for a third day in a row ordered an internet blackout—almost entirely blocking online access from 1 a.m. to 9 a.m.

PH president approves amnesty program for rebels

MANILA, Philippines (AP)—The Philippine president has approved an amnesty program for Muslim and communist rebels who would agree to surrender their weapons as they return to normal life in the latest such attempt to tame rural insurgencies that have raged for half a century.

Thousands of guerrillas belonging to two large Muslim groups in the country's south and a communist rebel faction could apply for the amnesty within a year after it gets approved by Congress, according to President Rodrigo Duterte's signed orders made public late Tuesday.

The three rebel groups have signed separate peace deals with Duterte's predecessors which have eased decades of fighting but have not been fully enforced due to unresolved issues. Leaders of the largest armed group, the Moro Islamic Liberation Front, have been put in charge temporarily of administering a new Muslim autonomous region in the south while thousands of its fighters are disarmed.

"It's welcome as long as it's based on our peace agreement," Moro Islamic Liberation Front spokesman Von Al Haq told The Associated Press by telephone.

He said that his rebel group's peace deal with the government provides for a general amnesty with an agreed manner of "decommissioning," a subtle term for disarming thousands of its combatants in batches depending largely on government compliance with the peace pact.

Duterte also agreed to include former insurgents who once belonged to the main communist New People's Army in his amnesty program. He labeled the NPA a "terrorist group" in his amnesty proclamation. His administration's peace talks with the Marxist group collapsed after both sides accused each other of launching attacks despite peace negotiations brokered by Norway.

The 75-year-old Duterte has promised to resolve Muslim and communist insurgencies before he leaves office. His six-year term ends in June next year.

"There is a need to reintegrate as soon as possible all rebels and insurgents into the mainstream society under the rule of law, including those who may have committed unlawful acts," Duterte said in his amnesty proclamation.

The amnesty "shall extinguish any criminal liability for acts committed in pursuit of political beliefs" and restore political and civil rights, which were lost due to criminal conviction, the proclamation said.

The amnesty would not cover kidnappings for ransom, massacres, rape, terrorism, drug trafficking and certain crimes the U.N. says should never be covered by amnesties, such as genocide, crimes against humanity and torture.

The amnesty program excludes the notoriously brutal Abu Sayyaf and other small armed bands associated with the Islamic State group.

New Zealand ends lockdown after deciding outbreak contained

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—A lockdown in the New Zealand city of Auckland will end at midnight, the government announced Wednesday after concluding a coronavirus outbreak had been contained.

"This is good news," Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said.

The nation's largest city was put into lockdown on Sunday after three unexplained cases were found in the community. It was the first lockdown in six months in a nation which so far has managed to successfully stamp out the spread of the disease.

The move to end the lockdown came as health authorities said the outbreak had grown by three cases to six in total. But Ardern said the additional cases were to be expected because they involved close contacts.

Ramped-up testing indicates the outbreak hasn't spread far. Laboratories processed more than 17,000 individual tests on Tuesday, authorities said, and they also tested wastewater samples, which came back negative.

"What this tells us is that we don't have a widespread outbreak, but rather a small chain of transmission which is manageable by our normal contact-tracing and testing procedures," Ardern said.

The initial cases were a mother, a father, and their 13-year-old daughter, who attends a local high school. Health authorities said the three new cases were a high school classmate, who was a close contact of the daughter, and two family members of the classmate.

Senior lawmakers in the Cabinet who met Wednesday afternoon decided most Aucklanders could go back to work and school from Thursday, but they would still leave some restrictions in place until at least Monday.

Genome testing has shown the family caught a more contagious variant first found in Britain.

The mother who caught the disease works at a catering company that does laundry for airlines. Officials have been investigating whether there is any link to infected passengers, but so far haven't been able to find a direct connection or explain how the outbreak might have begun.

World

Netanyahu and Biden speak about pandemic, Iran, peace effort

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visits the Leumit Health Care Services vaccination facility and meets Theodor Salzen, the 4 millionth person in Israel to be vaccinated for the coronavirus, in Jerusalem, Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021. AP

TEL AVIV, Israel (AP)—U.S. President Joe Biden and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu spoke by phone Wednesday after a month of silence that raised concerns in Israel about a frostier relationship between the two allies.

Netanyahu's office was first to announce the conversation, releasing a photo of a smiling prime minister holding a phone to his ear. The statement said the conversation was "warm and friendly" and lasted about an hour.

"We had a good conversation," Biden said during a brief exchange with reporters before the start of an Oval Office meeting with labor leaders.

The office of Netanyahu, who is facing a tough fight ahead of the March 23 election, was more descriptive.

"The two leaders noted their longstanding personal connection and said that they would work together to continue strengthening the steadfast alliance between Israel and the U.S.," the statement said.

Topics discussed, it added, included "the Iranian threat" of developing nuclear weapons, their efforts to fight the coronavirus pandemic and the desire to expand Israel's accords with Arab nations.

The White House later issued a statement saying that Biden "affirmed his personal history of steadfast commitment to Israel's security and conveyed his intent to strengthen all aspects of the U.S.-Israel partnership, including our strong defense cooperation."

The U.S. statement confirmed the two spoke about Iran and said Biden stated his support for the normalization agreements with Arab nations. It restated Biden's view of the importance of working to advance peace throughout the region, including between Israelis and Palestinians.

That the call had happened was perhaps as significant as the words exchanged.

Israelis had been complaining since Biden's inauguration in January that the new president had not reached out to Netanyahu, concerned that the silence could forecast a chillier relationship between the two close allies after former President Donald Trump's warm embrace.

Netanyahu has long boasted of his close relations with American presidents and other world leaders. He's hoping to dissuade Biden from rejoining the Iranian nuclear deal, to which Israel is strongly opposed.

Biden had been holding off calling Netanyahu, in part, because he first wanted to speak with key European allies as he weighs his next steps with Iran, according to a senior administration official who spoke on condition of anonymity.

Many Israelis fear that Biden, who served as President Barack Obama's vice president, will revive his approach to the region, both by returning to the Iran deal and by pressing Israel to make concessions to the Palestinians.

During last year's presidential campaign, Biden criticized Trump's decision to pull out of the 2015 Iran accord. But the new president publicly has insisted that Iran adhere to its commitment under the 2015 pact before his administration engage Tehran on potentially lifting Trump-imposed sanctions.

The United States is Israel's closest ally, providing about $3.8 billion in annual military aid and shielding it from censure in international forums over its policies toward the Palestinians.

Central European leaders push for faster vaccine deliveries

WARSAW, Poland (AP)—Central European leaders pushed Wednesday for faster deliveries of COVID-19 vaccines from every reliable manufacturer to speed up inoculations which they said is the way to conquer the pandemic and jump-start Europe's economic recovery.

The leaders of Hungary, Slovakia and Poland said they support purchasing vaccines from manufacturers regardless of "geopolitics" provided they are safe and effective. Hungary is the European Union's first and so far only member state to administer Russia's Sputnik V vaccine without waiting for approval from the European Medicines Agency.

"There is no Eastern or Western vaccine, there is only a good or a bad vaccine," Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orban told a news conference in Krakow, Poland. "It is not good to be too political about the health security of the people."

The Hungarian leader said procuring safe and effective vaccines quickly is now more important than their cost.

Slovakia's Prime Minister Igor Matowic and Mateusz Morawiecki of Poland backed Orban. The EU has not been receiving the full scheduled amounts of some 2 billion vaccine doses it has signed agreements for with Western drug makers.

The leaders were speaking at a meeting to mark the 30th anniversary of the Visegrad Group, an informal body of political and economic cooperation between Poland, Hungary, The Czech republic and Slovakia. Hosted by Morawiecki, it brought together Orban, Matovic and Czech Prime Minister Andrej Babis.

European Council President Charles Michel, who attended the celebrations, said EU leaders will discuss next week ways of increasing vaccine production and of speeding up inoculations.

The EU announced Wednesday that it has agreed to buy a further 300 million doses of Moderna's vaccine and was pumping almost a quarter of a billion euros (almost $300 million) into efforts to counter the threat of coronavirus variants that are spreading throughout the continent.

The development came on top of an announcement by Pfizer and BioNTech that they had signed a deal to deliver an additional 200 million doses of their vaccine to the bloc.

Maduro lodges new allegation of US spying on Venezuela firm

CARACAS, Venezuerla (AP)—Venezuela's president said Wednesday he is open to dialogue with the new U.S. administration on calming tensions between the two governments and easing his nation's economic crisis, even while doubling down with fresh accusations that six American oil executives jailed in Caracas spied for the CIA, a claim rejected by relatives and a defense lawyer in the case.

Nicolás Maduro, who spoke at a news conference with international reporters at the Miraflores presidential palace, refused to say whether he has had any direct contacts with the Biden administration, which took office nearly a month ago.

Maduro repeated a phrase he commonly uses, saying he is ready for a dialogue with the U.S. at any moment. The two nations broke ties two years ago when the Trump administration and dozens of other governments backed Maduro's leading adversary, Juan Guaidó, arguing that Maduro's presidency was illegitimate because his reelection was fraudulent.

The Trump administration heavily sanctioned Maduro and the Venezuelan oil sector as well as brought an indictment levying narcotrafficking charges against Maduro that carry a $15 million reward for his arrest.

Maduro is leading a campaign to resurrect his once-wealthy oil nation's decimated economy after more than two decades of socialist rule. Maduro seeks relief from sanctions, blaming them for Venezuela's problems.

"Is there room for dialogue?" Maduro said in response to a question from The Associated Press on whether he has started conversation with of U.S. President Joe Biden's administration. "There's always room for dialogue."

But the new accusations of spying against Citgo, a U.S.-based subsidiary of Venezuela's state oil company, will likely complicate efforts to win sympathy in Washington, where officials in Biden's State Department have already branded him a "dictator" who should not be engaged with in direct talks.

While Venezuela's economic and political crisis deepened, the six Citgo executives were lured back to Caracas from the firm's headquarters in Houston and jailed on financial charges. Their trial ended in November, with a judge finding them all guilty and sentencing them to prison.

UNITED STATES
Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
COUNCIL ON DEVELOPMENTAL DISABILITIES

NOTICE OF COUNCIL MEETING

Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 12, the CNMI Council on Developmental Disabilities hereby gives notice that it will hold its 1st Quarter General Membership Meeting on March 2, 2021 from 11:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. at the Hyatt Regency, Saipan – Giovanni's.

AGENDA

I. Call to Order
II. Roll Call
III. Review & Adoption of Agenda of March 2, 2021
IV. Review & Adoption of Meeting Minutes of January 28, 2021
V. Reports
- **a. Chairperson**
- **b. State Plan Committee Chairperson**
- **c. Fiscal Committee Chairperson**
- **d. Executive Director**

VI. Action Items
- **a. Ratify the Approval of the Proposed FY 2021 DD Basic Grant Budget**
- **b. Ratify the Approval of the Proposed FY 2021 Assistive Technology Grant Budget**
- **c. Ratify the Approval of the Amended FY 2020 DD Basic Grant Budget**
- **d. Review & Approve the Proposed FY 2022 Local Budget Submission**
- **e. Ratify the Approval of FY 2020 CDD Annual Report**

VII. Old Business
- **a. DD Basic Grant State Plan Survey Update**
- **b. March 2021 – DD Awareness Month Update**
- **c. Disability Awareness Campaign Update**

VIII. New Business
- **a. Center for Living Independently Workshop**
- **b. Disability Network Partners (DNP) Conference**
- **c. DD Council Website Redesign**
- **d. 1021 Champions of Equal Opportunities Award Ceremony**

IX. Miscellaneous
X. Next Meeting
XI. Adjournment

Note: Pursuant to P.L. 8-41, Section 13(a) 7, the Council may vote to meet in Executive Session. In accordance to the American with Disabilities Act (ADA), individuals who wish to attend this meeting and require special accommodations are requested to call the Council 5 days in advance at 664-7000. The Public is welcome to submit written or 3 minutes oral comments regarding the agenda above.

/s/ Jan Barcinas
Chairperson

This ad was paid for by funds from the DD Basic Grant Part A (Administrative)

Off The Wall

Thousands of cold-stunned sea turtles being rescued in Texas

AP

Thousands of Atlantic green sea turtles and Kemp's ridley sea turtles suffering from cold stun are laid out to recover Tuesday, Feb. 16, 2021 at the South Padre Island Convention Center on South Padre Island, Texas.

SOUTH PADRE ISLAND, Texas (AP)—Residents, some of whom lack heat or basic amenities in their own homes due to the unusually chilly weather, have been rescuing cold-stunned sea turtles and taking them to a convention center in a South Texas resort town.

"Every 15 minutes or less there's another truck or SUV that pulls up," Ed Caum, executive director of the South Padre Island Convention and Visitors Bureau, told The Associated Press on Wednesday.

He said sometimes people bring one or two sea turtles, sometimes more. "We had trailers full yesterday coming in that had 80, 100, 50," he said. The South Padre Island Convention Center started pitching in Monday when its neighbor, Sea Turtle Inc., could no longer handle the number of sea turtles being dropped off, and their mostly outdoor operation had lost power. He said the convention center itself didn't have power or water till early Wednesday morning.

He says they've "collected" more than 3,500 sea turtles so far. He said he hesitates to use the word rescued because "we know we're going to lose some."

Caum said that with another cold front approaching, they don't know when they'll be able to return the sea turtles to the water.

Temperatures in the area on Wednesday afternoon were in the 40s. He said it may be Saturday—when temperatures are expected to reach the low 60s (above 15 Celsius)—before the turtles can be released back into the Gulf.

He said with power returned they have been able to bring the convention center's temperature to 60 degrees.

"We're trying to do the best we can to save as many turtles as possible," he said.

Koala rescued after 5-car pileup on Australian freeway

CANBERRA, Australia (AP)—A koala has been rescued after causing a five-car pileup while trying to cross a six-lane freeway in southern Australia.

Police said the crash in heavy Monday morning traffic in the city of Adelaide caused some injuries but no one required an ambulance.

The animal's rescuer said she got out of her car to investigate what had caused the pileup. Nadia Tugwell, with her coat in hand, teamed up with a stranger clutching a blanket in a bid to capture the marsupial. A concrete highway divider had blocked the koala's crossing.

"The koala was absolutely not damaged in any way," Tugwell said. "It was very active, but very calm."

Once the koala was in her trunk, Tugwell drove to a gas station to turn the animal over to wildlife rescuers. In the interim, the koala was able to climb from the trunk into her SUV's cabin.

AP

This photo released by Nadia Tugwell, shows a koala inside Tugwell's car in Adelaide, Australia on Monday, Feb. 8, 2021.

"It decided to come to the front toward me, so I said, 'OK, you stay here. I'll get out,'" she said.

"It started sitting for a while on the steering wheel: (as if) saying: 'let's go for a drive,' and that's when I started taking photos," she added.

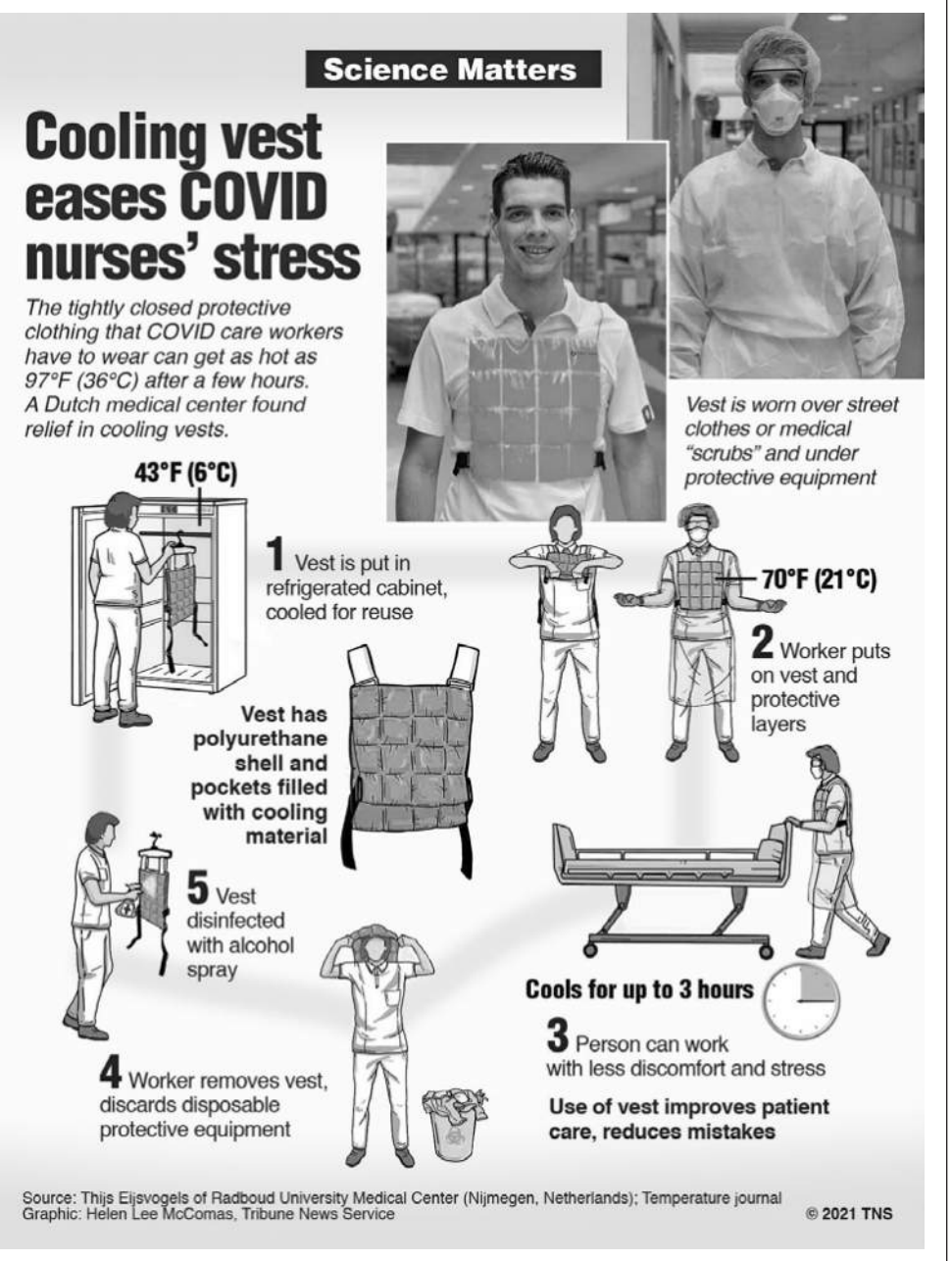
Tugwell said she had learned from past experience how to calm koalas by covering their eyes. She lives near a eucalyptus forest outside Adelaide and has twice called animal handlers to rescue koalas injured in fights with other koalas.

"I live up in the hills, and if you let them do what they want to do and you don't chase them or something, they're OK," Tugwell said.

The leather trimmings of her luxury vehicle were scratched by the animal, but Tugwell said the happy ending was well worth the damage.

The koala later was released in a forest—well away from the freeway.

Science & Techology


Science Matters
Cooling vest eases COVID nurses' stress
The tightly closed protective clothing that COVID care workers have to wear can get as hot as 97°F (36°C) after a few hours. A Dutch medical center found relief in cooling vests.
Vest is worn over street clothes or medical "scrubs" and under protective equipment
43°F (6°C)
1 Vest is put in refrigerated cabinet, cooled for reuse
Vest has polyurethane shell and pockets filled with cooling material
70°F (21°C)
2 Worker puts on vest and protective layers
5 Vest disinfected with alcohol spray
4 Worker removes vest, discards disposable protective equipment
Cools for up to 3 hours
3 Person can work with less discomfort and stress
Use of vest improves patient care, reduces mistakes
Source: Thijs Eijsvogels of Radboud University Medical Center (Nijmegen, Netherlands); Temperature journal
Graphic: Helen Lee McComas, Tribune News Service
© 2021 TNS

TECH Q&A: Stop phantom message tones on an Android phone

By STEVE ALEXANDER
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Steve Alexander covers technology for the Minneapolis Star Tribune. Readers may write to him at Tech Q&A, 425 Portland Ave. S., Minneapolis, Minn. 55488-0002; email: steve.j.alexander@gmail.com. Please include a full name, city and phone number.

Q: When my car and my Samsung Galaxy S5 phone connect via Bluetooth, the phone's notification alert tone goes off every 15 seconds. But when I check the phone, there are no notification messages. What can I do?

A: The problem is probably a misbehaving app or an error in the phone's sound software. Try these methods to fix it:

See if the problem lies with an app. One method is to click Apps, then Settings and then "Notifications." You will see a list of your phone's apps, each with an on-off switch. Turn them off one at a time to see if the unwanted tone goes away.

Another method is to put the phone in "safe mode" (see tinyurl.com/1loueefc). If the problem disappears in safe mode, then an app that you have added to the phone is at fault. You will need to uninstall your acquired apps one at a time to find the culprit.

See if the problem is caused by the phone's sound software. Click Apps, then Settings, then "Sounds and vibration." Turn off these options one by one to see if the recurring tone disappears: "Touch sounds" (caused by touching the screen), "Screen lock sounds," "Emergency tone" and "Charging sound" (caused by attaching a charger).

If neither approach works, try deleting the data files in the phone's "cache partition" (see tinyurl.com/xmjg8xd6). These temporary files may have been corrupted during an app installation or a phone software update. Erasing them won't affect your personal phone data.

As a last resort, do a "factory reset" on the phone (see tinyurl.com/1jxlg4h4), which returns it to its original settings and content. This reset will delete your personal data, so back it up first.

Q: When I use Microsoft 365, the online version of Microsoft Office, the spell-check feature in Word doesn't work with existing documents, but does work with new ones. What can I do?

A: Microsoft 365's Word complaint log hasn't listed this issue (see tinyurl.com/1hqi0l65), so I suspect there's a problem with the Word program on your PC.

The most likely cause is a change in Word's many settings, several of which affect editing functions (see tinyurl.com/11p48oga and tinyurl.com/8m6kt0x3). Even if you didn't make any changes, a software update to Word could have altered the settings.

Life & Style

Man arrested in hit-and-run death of Nicki Minaj's father

MINEOLA, N.Y. (AP)—A 70-year-old man arrested Wednesday in the hit-and-run death of rapper Nicki Minaj's father stopped briefly to ask the injured man if he was OK but didn't call for help, police said.

Charles Polevich faces charges of leaving the scene of an incident and tampering with physical evidence in connection with the death last week of 64-year-old Robert Maraj on New York's Long Island.

Polevich, who splits time between Long Island and Guam, where he runs an environmental consulting business, is free on bail following an arraignment in Nassau County court. As a result of his arrest, his driver's license has been suspended, he was ordered to surrender his passport and a judge said he can't leave the state.

"He was absolutely aware of what happened," Nassau County Police Detective Lt. Stephen Fitzpatrick said at a news conference.

"He got out of the car and he looked at the deceased, got into his car, and made the conscious decision to leave instead of dialing 911, instead of calling an ambulance for the man," Fitzpatrick said. "He went home and secluded the vehicle. He's well aware of what he did."

Polevich's lawyer, Michael Scotto, described what happened as a tragic accident and said their thoughts were with Maraj's family.

Maraj was struck by a car at 6:15 p.m. Friday while walking along Roslyn Road in Mineola. He was taken to a hospital and was pronounced dead on Saturday.

Polevich exited his car after hitting Maraj, stood over him and asked if he was OK before walking back to his car and fleeing the scene, police said. Polevich went home and parked his car in a detached garage in an attempt to conceal it from view, police said.

Polevich surrendered Wednesday after detectives used pieces of surveillance video to track the car involved in the crash—a white, 1992 Volvo station wagon—to Polevich's Mineola home, Fitzpatrick said.

Minaj, 38, was born Onika Tanya Maraj in Trinidad and was raised in the New York City borough of Queens. She has not made any public statement about her father's death.

Minaj's mother, Carol Maraj, told Newsday that the family was relieved a suspect was being charged in his death.

"I'm very, very, very happy about the arrest," Carol Maraj said.

Minaj has spoken in the past about having a strained relationship with her father.

In interviews, she said Robert Maraj suffered from drug addiction and was abusive toward her mother, once setting fire to their house with her inside.

Rush Limbaugh, voice of American conservatism, has died

Limbaugh

Rush Limbaugh, the talk radio host who ripped into liberals and laid waste to political correctness with a captivating brand of malice that made him one of the most powerful voices in politics, influencing the rightward push of American conservatism and the rise of Donald Trump, died Wednesday. He was 70.

Limbaugh said a year ago that he had lung cancer. His death was announced on his show by his wife, Kathryn.

Unflinchingly conservative, wildly partisan, bombastically self-promoting and larger than life, Limbaugh galvanized listeners for more than 30 years with his talent for sarcastic, insult-laced commentary.

He called himself an entertainer, but his three-hour weekday radio show broadcast on nearly 600 U.S. stations helped shape the national political conversation, swaying ordinary Republicans and the direction of their party.

"In my heart and soul, I know I have become the intellectual engine of the conservative movement," Limbaugh, with typical immodesty, told author Zev Chafets in the 2010 book "Rush Limbaugh: An Army of One."

He called himself a "truth detector" and "harmless, lovable little fuzz ball" but often trafficked in lies and conspiracies with contempt for his opposition that often veered into cruelty.

When actor Michael J. Fox, suffering from Parkinson's disease, appeared in a Democratic campaign commercial, Limbaugh mocked his tremors. When a Washington advocate for the homeless killed himself, he cracked jokes. As the AIDS epidemic raged in the 1980s, he made the dying a punchline. He called 12-year-old Chelsea Clinton a dog.

He suggested that the Democrats' stand on reproductive rights would have led to the abortion of Jesus Christ. When a woman accused Duke University lacrosse players of rape, he derided her as a "ho," and when a Georgetown University law student supported expanded contraceptive coverage, he dismissed her as a "slut." When Barack Obama was elected president in 2008, Limbaugh said flatly: "I hope he fails."

He was frequently accused of bigotry and blatant racism but could often enunciate the Republican platform better and more entertainingly than any party leader, becoming a GOP kingmaker.

Trump, like a long line of conservative politicians before him, heaped praise on Limbaugh, and during last year's State of the Union speech, awarded him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the nation's highest civilian honor. On Wednesday, Trump lauded Limbaugh on Fox News as "a legend" who "was fighting till the very end."

Limbaugh influenced the likes of Sean Hannity, Glenn Beck, Bill O'Reilly and countless other conservative commentators who pushed the boundaries of what passes as acceptable public discourse.

Former Trump casino where stars played goes out with a bang

AP

The former Trump Plaza casino is imploded on Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021, in Atlantic City, N.J.

ATLANTIC CITY, N.J. (AP)—A spot on the Atlantic City Boardwalk where movie stars, athletes and rock stars used to party—and a future president honed his instincts for bravado and hype—was reduced to a dusty pile of rubble on Wednesday.

The former Trump Plaza casino was imploded after falling into such disrepair that chunks of the building began peeling off and crashing to the ground.

A series of loud explosions around 9 a.m. rocked the building, which started to collapse in a wave from back to front until it plunged straight down in a giant cloud of dust that enveloped the beach and Boardwalk. Overall, it took the structure less than 20 seconds to implode.

"I got chills," Atlantic City Mayor Marty Small said. "This is a historic moment. It was exciting."

He estimated the remaining pile of rubble is about eight stories tall, and would be removed by June 10. Some of it could be used by environmentalists interested in building an artificial fishing reef off the coast of Atlantic City.

Additional parts of the casino-hotel complex fronting on the Boardwalk and on Pacific Avenue, the main road along the row of casinos, were not included in the implosion. They will be demolished in the near future using heavy equipment, not explosives.

The removal of the one-time jewel of former President Donald Trump's casino empire clears the way for a prime development opportunity on the middle of the Boardwalk, where the Plaza used to market itself as "Atlantic City's centerpiece."

Grandmothers refuse to follow practical gift-giving request

DEAR ABBY: Our 11-year-old has learned to lie, and we feel terrible about it. Because she has a sensory processing disorder, clothes are a useless gift because the seams and fabric are often uncomfortable for her. We have repeatedly asked family and friends not to gift her clothes, but her grandmas are in denial and often do it anyway.

Our sweet daughter has decided that sparing their feelings is more important than asserting her own, and I'm worried this behavior will teach her that her feelings are less important than other people's. How do we teach her to be polite and honor her own feelings and wishes without offending well-meaning relatives who cannot understand that she doesn't appreciate or value these gifts?

MAMA BEAR IN TEXAS

DEAR MAMA BEAR: Of course your daughter should be taught that her feelings—and opinions—are important. But accepting gifts graciously is proper etiquette. It is considered rude for a recipient to tell folks their gifts are unwelcome or unwanted.

It would not be rude, however, for YOU to run interference by reminding these clueless grannies about your daughter's problem and telling them what has been happening to their impractical gifts—that they are given away, donated, etc. because she cannot wear them. A far more welcome gift would be something she's interested in or a gift card to a store that carries items she might like. Then suggest an area of interest of hers they may be unaware of. Also, for "insurance," request a receipt be included with the gift.

DEAR ABBY: I've been dating my boyfriend for two years. We're in our 40s. I moved to the city he lives in, but he's currently working in a different state, and he has been extremely stressed these last few weeks. He's paying rent and utilities in our state as well as the state he's working in.

He says he is overwhelmed and wants to take a break—from me! He also said he's too emotionally unstable right now to continue our relationship. I'm devastated. I know he and his family have depression issues, but I love him so much. He's unwilling to take any financial assistance from his family.

I don't know what to do. I don't want to end our relationship, but he's refusing to talk to me or discuss it.

OUT OF OPTIONS IN OHIO

DEAR OUT OF OPTIONS: After two years of dating and a life-changing move to his city, I can only imagine the turmoil you are feeling at this turn of events. The problems that are stressing him out are real. Because he's unwilling to talk to you, and you can't force him, there is nothing you can do to fix them.

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

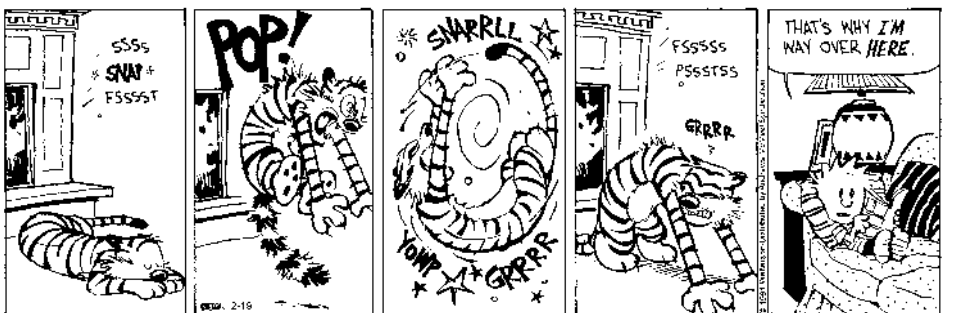
If you plan to remain there hoping things will change, set a realistic time limit and stick to it. If the deadline passes and he still feels the same, then realize how important it is for you to live someplace where you have the strongest emotional support as you rebuild your life. Write him a letter. Tell him you will always be there if he needs to talk, and encourage him to check back in with his doctor to address the depression.

What teens need to know about sex, drugs, AIDS and getting along with peers and parents is in "What Every Teen Should Know." Send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby, Teen Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

Pastimes

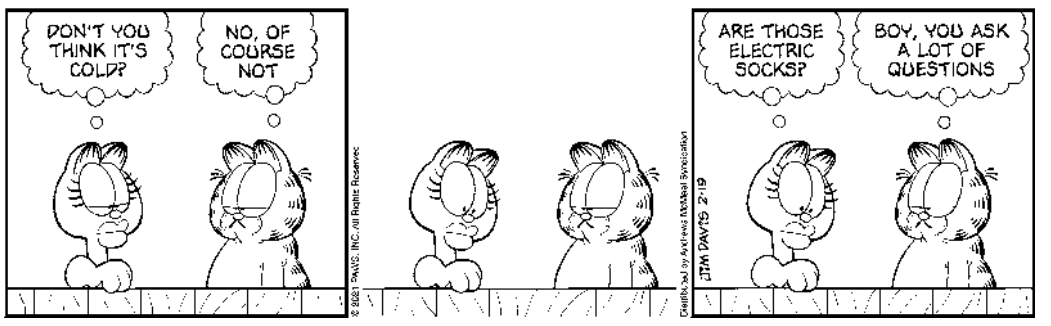
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



Garfield®

By Jim Davis



Adam@home

By Bryan Basset

YOU GOOD?
I'M GREAT!
I READ ALL KINDS OF BOOKS THIS WEEK. HUMOR, HORROR, ROMANCE, TRUE CRIME.
NOW, WATCH. THE LITTLE GREMLINS IN MY BRAIN'LL START MAKING CREATIVITY OUT OF THAT STEW.
YOU HAVE STEW GREMLINS IN YOUR BRAIN?
I HOPE SO. SOMETIMES THEY TAKE THE WEEK OFF.
2-19

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

I'D LIKE TO OFFER YOU OUR 2ND SHIFT POSITION.
ANY QUESTIONS?
BEFORE STARTING, I'D LIKE TO GIVE 2 WEEKS' NOTICE.
TO YOUR CURRENT EMPLOYER?
NO - TO MY HAPPY HOUR BARTENDER.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

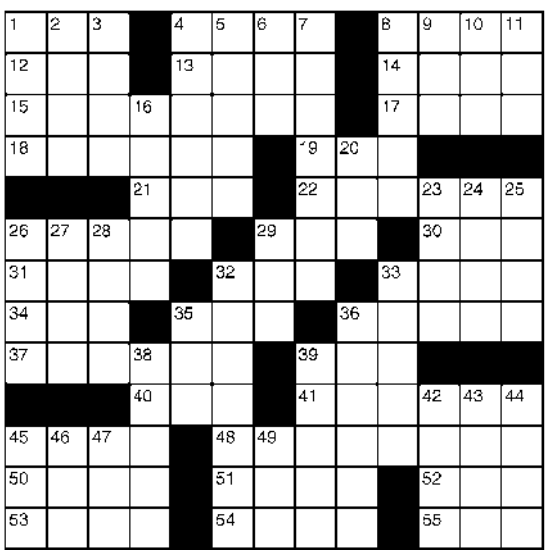
ACROSS
1 Pac. counterpart
4 "Stay" singer Lisa
8 Postal delivery
12 Dad on "Black-ish"
13 Bullets
14 Hotel chain
15 "Jurassic Park" creature
17 Video-streaming brand
18 Free of bumps
19 Discoverer's call
21 "Isn't — bit like you and me?"
22 Vienna's river
26 Run in the wash
29 Band's booking
30 R&B singer Des'—
31 "— Lang Syne"
32 Baltimore paper
33 Ump's call
34 Dundee denial
35 ACLU issues
36 Boston team, for short
37 — clock
39 Male cat
40 Year in Madrid
41 Puts into law
45 Mentor
48 Sound of a ringing bell
50 On the Baltic, say
51 Furniture brand
52 Boy king
53 Big rig
54 Trawler gear
55 UFO fliers

DOWN
1 Totals
2 Decorate
3 Comic Jay
4 Endured
5 Nebraska city
6 Flightless bird
7 "Prince Igor" composer
8 Blockhead
9 I love (Lat.)
10 Squid squirt
11 Lucy of "Kill Bill"
16 Reacted to a light show
20 Witch
23 Caspian Sea feeder
24 Karate level
25 Morays
26 French seat
27 Maui meal
28 Power co. supply
29 Gloomy guy
32 Substituted (for)
33 Hit the roof
35 Harry Potter pal
36 Party dances
38 Island of Hawaii
39 Doctrine
42 Refer to
43 Threaded fastener
44 LAPD ranks
45 Ozone, for one
46 Employ
47 "The One I Love" band
49 White House nickname

Solution time: 25 mins.

S	U	N	G		A	H	A	B		A	B	S
I	I	A	L		N	E	M	O		J	H	I
F	.	N	O	I	N	O	I	R		H	A	N
A	L	A	S	K	A			E	V	E	N	S
			S	O		K	I	R	O	V		
D	E	F	Y		C	A	M		N	O	A	H
E	M	I			U	T	A			I	D	C
B	U	L	B		A	I	C		O	R	Z	O
		M	A	T	T	E		E	L			
K	E	N	Y	A			W	A	I	V	E	D
I	S	C		R	E	S	E	R	V	O	I	R
L	A	I		T	E	E	S		E	T	N	A
O	U	R		S	L	A			S	E	E	M

Yesterday's answer 2-19



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955**! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Benicio Del Toro, 54; Seal, 58; Jeff Daniels, 66; Smokey Robinson, 81.

Happy Birthday: Strive for harmony, and you'll gain peace of mind. How you interact with others and do your best to be part of the solution, not the problem, will help pave the way to a brighter future. Refuse to let petty differences stand between you and your happiness. Assess situations and prepare to make this a year to remember. Having patience will deflect problems. Your numbers are 9, 14, 20, 27, 39, 41, 45.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19):* Be receptive to ideas presented to you. Something someone shares will set the foundation for an idea that can help provide insight into something you want to pursue. Refuse to let what someone thinks discourage you from following your dream. ✪✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20):* Do whatever it takes to live up to your promises. It's what you accomplish, not what you allude to, that will ultimately turn heads. Show passion in all that you aspire to, and rewards will follow. ✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20):* Look, and you'll find a way to get what you want. Taking a back seat to someone manipulatively trying to outdo you is not acceptable. You have plenty to offer, and it's time to strut your stuff and make things happen. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22):* Use your charm to get your way. A chance to show off what you have to offer will draw attention from someone who can give you the boost you need. Opportunity is within reach, but only if you can adapt to change. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22):* Settle into something that feels comfortable. It will ease stress and encourage you to follow a path that is more to your liking. Love and romance are on the rise. Spending more time with someone who enhances your life is favored. ✪✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22):* Live in the moment, learn from the experience and pour your energy into something you find fulfilling. Taking a stroll down memory lane will be a good reminder of what you don't want to pursue. Embrace new beginnings. ✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22):* You're ready to take on the world. Let negativity go. Allow a positive attitude, new ideas and the desire to make a difference to someone or something you cherish take over. Your discipline and hard work will pay off. ✪✪✪✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21):* Mixed emotions will get in the way of success. Decompartmentalize what you have to accomplish, and it will be easier to complete your responsibilities. One step at a time is all it takes. Start the ball rolling. ✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21):* The past will be your best reference when you want to move forward or start something new. Don't rely on others when it's the experience you have that will point you in the right direction. Love and romance are on an upswing. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): Stay on course. Don't deviate from your plans or let anyone push you in a direction you don't want to go. Change begins with you; make decisions that will set you up for success. Live life your way. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Take your time. Listen carefully, and consider the effect your words will have on others. Getting along with others will be half the battle when you are trying to get things done. When you disagree, say little and proceed to do as you please. ✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20):* Put more energy into getting ahead. Connect with people who owe you a favor or those who have something to offer that will help you reach your goal. A positive change will enhance the knowledge and experience you have accumulated. ✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are intuitive, persuasive and proactive. You are bold and judicious.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

	5						8	
7			9		3			4
				5				
	3		8		1		5	
		4		3		8		
	2		5		4		6	
				6				
6			2		9			1
	1						4	

Difficulty Level ★★★★ 2/19

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

6	4	5	3	8	7	2	1	9
1	3	7	9	4	2	6	8	5
9	8	2	5	1	6	7	3	4
5	7	9	4	6	8	3	2	1
3	1	4	7	2	9	8	5	6
8	2	6	1	5	3	4	9	7
4	5	8	2	7	1	9	6	3
2	9	1	6	3	4	5	7	8
7	6	3	8	9	5	1	4	2

Difficulty Level ★★★

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WONDERWORD®

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

DON'T SPILL THE BEANS — Solution: 9 letters

E	H	E	L	U	R	T	C	I	R	T	S	E	R	C
S	T	L	L	A	E	U	Q	S	N	O	L	R	E	E
I	U	A	L	R	V	T	N	E	V	E	E	G	R	V
R	R	R	C	A	O	O	W	M	A	S	A	E	A	I
P	T	E	E	I	C	S	T	K	A	S	P	M	L	T
R	S	V	P	S	N	E	C	E	S	L	T	R	C	R
U	W	E	N	O	P	U	T	E	Y	G	I	O	E	U
S	H	A	L	E	R	O	M	A	A	E	M	F	D	F
S	I	L	E	N	T	T	N	M	E	R	D	N	R	E
S	S	H	A	R	E	S	E	S	O	P	A	I	L	E
E	P	E	C	I	O	V	I	M	E	C	E	T	(H)	K
F	E	R	U	A	T	R	U	L	B	N	T	R	(I)	A
N	R	Q	E	B	I	R	T	H	D	A	Y	N	(N)	E
O	D	E	T	A	I	L	S	S	T	O	R	Y	(T)	P
C	A	C	C	I	D	E	N	T	S	E	G	G	U	S

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Accident, Admit, Birthday, Blurt, Call, Communicate, Confess, Cover, Declare, Details, Event, Friend, Furtive, Game, Hide, Hint, Inform, Leak, Listen, Message, News, Quiet, Repeat, Reply, Report, Response, Restrict, Reveal, Rule, Rumor, Secret, Share, Silent, Speak, Spread, Squeal, Story, Suggest, Surprise, Tattle, Teaser, Truth, Voice, Vote, Whisper

Yesterday's Answer: Selection

Jo's Jewels Collector's Edition is back by popular demand! Purchase online at www.WonderWordBooks.com or call 1-800-642-6480.

Osaka ends Serena's bid for historic win

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Once again, Serena Williams came within reach of a record-tying 24th Grand Slam singles title, playing well enough to get to the closing days of a major tournament.

And once again, Williams couldn't quite get it done—beaten 6-3, 6-4 by Naomi Osaka in the Australian Open semifinals on Thursday.

Osaka, who also beat Williams in the chaotic 2018 U.S. Open final, reached her fourth major title match and stretched her winning streak to 20 matches by claiming the last eight points.

"I don't know if there's any little kids out here today, but I was a little kid watching her play," Osaka, 23, said about Williams, 39, "and just to be on the court playing against her, for me, is a dream."

The No. 3-seeded Osaka's Grand Slam collection also includes last year's U.S. Open and the 2019 Australian Open and she is, without a doubt, the most dangerous hard-court player in the women's game at the moment.

That used to be Williams, of course. But she was off-target too much in this contest, finishing with twice as many unforced errors, 24, as winners, 12.

After collecting her professional era-record 23rd major singles trophy at the Melbourne Park in 2017 while pregnant, Williams has not been able to pull even with Margaret Court's mark of 24 for the most Grand Slam titles in history.

Since returning to the tour in 2018 after having her daughter, Williams has reached four major finals and lost them all. She's also now lost in the semifinals twice in that span.

AP

Naomi Osaka returns to Serena Williams during the semifinals of the 2021 Australian Open on February 18 2021, at Melbourne Park in Melbourne, Australia.

On Saturday, at 7:30 p.m. local time (3:30 a.m. EST), Osaka will meet a first-time Grand Slam finalist for the championship. No. 22 Jennifer Brady of the United States was scheduled to face No. 25 Karolina Muchova in Thursday's second semifinal.

One men's semifinal was on Thursday's schedule: No. 1 Novak Djokovic vs. Aslan Karatsev, a qualifier from Russia who is ranked 114th and playing in his first Grand Slam tournament.

Djokovic is seeking a ninth Australian Open title and 18th Grand Slam trophy overall.

Rafael Nadal—who lost in the quarterfinals to Stefanos Tsitsipas after blowing a two-set lead— and Roger Federer are tied for the men's record of 20.

Spectators were back in the stands at Rod Laver Arena on Thursday after they were barred from attending the tournament for five days during a local COVID-19 lockdown. About 7,000 people were allowed into the stadium for Williams-Osaka, roughly half of capacity.

Ushers walked through the aisles at changeovers to remind fans they needed to wear a mask or over their nose and mouth.

On the hottest day of the hard-court tournament so far—85 degrees Fahrenheit (30 Celsius)— Osaka got out to a shaky start, perhaps prodded into pressing in her opening service game by a booming cross-court backhand return winner from Williams on the match's second point.

That was followed by a double-fault, a wild forehand and, eventually, a netted backhand that handed over a break. Quickly, Williams went up 2-0, then held another break point with a chance to lead 3-0 after another double-fault by Osaka.

"I was just really, like, nervous and scared, I think, at the beginning," said Osaka, who was born in Japan and moved to the U.S. when she was 3. "And then I sort of eased my way into it."

Didn't take long to right herself, however.

Suddenly, it was Osaka powering in aces, putting groundstrokes right where she wanted, covering the court so well. Williams' movement has been terrific in Melbourne, but she suddenly was flat-footed, her miscues accumulating precipitously.

Five games went by in a flash, all into Osaka's column, and soon enough, the first set belonged to her, too.

Williams' frustration was made plain early in the second set, when she leaned over at the baseline and screamed, "Make a shot! Make a shot!"

Osaka never has tried to hide how much she admires Williams and models her game after the American's.

Nadal falls after blowing 2-set lead against Tsitsipas

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP)—Rafael Nadal entered his Australian Open quarterfinal with a 223-1 record when grabbing the first two sets of a Grand Slam match.

Thanks to his own mistakes—and some spirited play by Stefanos Tsitsipas—that mark is now 223-2.

A couple of uncharacteristically sloppy overheads and a framed backhand in a third-set tiebreaker began Nadal's undoing, and his bid here for a men's-record 21st major championship eventually ended Wednesday with a 3-6, 2-6, 7-6 (4), 6-4, 7-5 loss to the younger, sharper Tsitsipas.

"Was little bit of everything, no? I missed a couple of balls in the tiebreak that I shouldn't—that I could not—miss if I want to win. And that's it," said Nadal, who briefly left the Spanish portion of his post-match news conference after clutching at his cramping right hamstring.

"I have to go back home," Nadal said, "and practice to be better."

At his put-the-ball-where-he-wants-it best in the early going, Nadal went ahead rather easily, winning 27 consecutive points on his serve in one stretch and running his streak of consecutive sets won at major tournaments to 35, one shy of Roger Federer's record for the professional era.

Nadal and Federer are currently tied at 20 Grand Slam singles titles, more than any other man in the history of a sport that dates to the late 1800s.

But Tsitsipas never wavered and that surprisingly poor tiebreaker by Nadal—thinking too far ahead, perhaps?—helped hand over the third set and begin the epic comeback.

"I started very nervous, I won't lie," the fifth-seeded Tsitsipas said. "But I don't know what happened after the third set. I just flied like a little bird. Everything was working for me. The emotions at the very end are indescribable."

As Tsitsipas played, in Nadal's estimation, a "very, very high level of tennis" over the last two sets, the 34-year-old Spaniard's play dipped considerably.

Nadal made a total of only 10 unforced errors in the first two sets combined, then 32 the rest of the way—11 in the third, 14 in the fourth, seven in the fifth.

The only other occasion in which Nadal went from a two-set advantage to a defeat in a Slam came at the 2015 U.S. Open against Fabio Fognini (who just so happened to have lost to Nadal in the fourth round at Melbourne Park this year).

So now, instead of Nadal attempting to surpass Federer, it will be Tsitsipas—a 22-year-old from Greece with a flashy game—who will meet 2019 U.S. Open runner-up Daniil Medvedev in the semifinals Friday.

Neither Tsitsipas nor Medvedev has won a Grand Slam tournament.

In the other men's semifinal, 17-time major champion and No. 1-ranked Novak Djokovic will face 114th-ranked qualifier Aslan Karatsev, who is making his Grand Slam debut.

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Jazz roll past short-handed Clippers

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Donovan Mitchell scored 24 points, Rudy Gobert had 23 points and 20 rebounds and the Utah Jazz rolled past the short-handed Los Angeles Clippers, 114-96 on Wednesday night for their ninth straight victory

Jordan Clarkson scored 18 points to help the NBA-leading Jazz improve to 24-5 with their 20th win in 21 games. After three tight quarters, Utah broke it open in the fourth to win this matchup of Western Conference powerhouses—although it wasn't a proper showdown with the Clippers missing injured superstars Kawhi Leonard and Paul George.

The Jazz beat the Clippers for the ninth time in the last 12 matchups despite a rough first half that didn't resemble Utah's impressive recent play. Utah opened up a tight game with a 14-2 run spanning the third and fourth quarters, followed by a 16-3 run to put it away.

Lou Williams scored 16 points, and Reggie Jackson added 15 for the Clippers.

The Clippers were profoundly disadvantaged in this heavyweight matchup: Leonard missed his third straight game with a bruised leg, and George missed his seventh straight with an injured toe. Nicolas Batum also sat out with a concussion, leaving LA without three regular starters.

AP

Utah Jazz guard Donovan Mitchell is surrounded by Los Angeles Clippers defenders during the first half of an NBA basketball game Wednesday, Feb. 17, 2021, in Los Angeles.

Trail Blazers 126, Pelicans 124

In New Orleans, Damian Lillard scored 43 points, including a go-ahead three-point play with 16.5 seconds left, to lift Portland past the Pelicans for its sixth consecutive victory.

Lillard also added 16 assists—his third consecutive game of at least 30 points and 10 assists.

Lillard had 11 fourth-quarter points and was clutch in the final seven minutes. JJ Redick gave the Pelicans a 105-103 lead with 7:34 left, capping a 7-0 New Orleans run, but Lillard then came off the bench and immediately hit a 3-pointer as Portland regained the lead. Anfernee Simons added a 3-pointer on the next possession to make it 109-105.

The Pelicans retook the lead on a pair of 3-pointers by Lonzo Ball and Redick and led for the final time at 124-123 with 26.4 seconds left after Zion Williamson made two free throws. Williamson finished with 36 points.

But Lillard drove past Ball on the left side of the lane for the layup and drew contact to put Portland up 126-124.

The Pelicans had a final chance, but Ball missed a 3-pointer and Brandon Ingram threw up an airball at the buzzer.

Hawks 122, Celtics 114

In Boston, Trae Young had 40 points and eight assists and Atlanta beat the Celtics to snap a four-game losing streak.

Clint Capela had 24 points and 13 rebounds to help Atlanta win in Boston for the first time since April 8, 2018, ending a seven-game losing streak. John Collins added 20 points and six rebounds.

Warriors 120, Heat 112, OT

In San Francisco, Stephen Curry hit a go-ahead 3-pointer with 1:15 left in overtime and had 25 points, 11 assists and seven rebounds to help Golden State outlast Miami.

Kent Bazemore had a season-high 26 points for Golden State. Draymond Green was a late scratch by the Warriors because of right ankle soreness..

Jimmy Butler had his second straight triple-double for Miami with 13 points, 12 rebounds and 11 assists.

76ers 118, Rockets 113

In Philadelphia, Joel Embiid had 31 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists and hit a key jumper late in the 76ers' victory over Houston.

Seth Curry scored 25 points, and Tobias Harris added 24 to help the Eastern Conference-leading 76ers snap a three-game losing streak. Ben Simmons (illness) didn't play for the 76ers a game after scoring a career-high 42 points and adding nine rebounds and 12 assists.

Wizards 130, Nuggets 128

In Washington, Bradley Beal made two free throws with a tenth of a second left and the Wizards beat Denver for their third straight victory.

Davis Bertans had career highs with nine 3-pointers and 35 points, Beal finished with 25 points and a season-high 10 assists, and Russell Westbrook had a triple-double with 12 points, 13 rebounds and 12 assists. Washington has won three straight for the first time since Dec. 1-5, 2018.

Jamal Murray led Denver with 35 points, and Nikola Jokic scored 33 points.

Magic 107, Knicks 89

In Orlando, Terrence Ross scored 18 of his season-high 30 points in the second half and the Magic used a decisive third-quarter run to beat New York.

Orlando went on a 25-8 run over the final nine minutes of the third quarter and outscored New York 30-14 in the period to wipe out a three-point halftime deficit.

Pacers 134, Timberwolves 128, OT

In Minneapolis, Domantas Sabonis had 36 points, 17 rebounds and 10 rebounds, Malcolm Brogdon added 32 points and nine rebounds and Indiana beat Minnesota in overtime.

The Pacers played their second straight overtime game, coming off an OT loss to Chicago on Monday.

Grizzlies 122, Thunder 113

In Memphis, Grayson Allen and Jonas Valanciunas each scored 22 points, and Ja Morant had 15 points, 11 rebounds and 12 assists for his first triple-double of the season and the Grizzlies beat Oklahoma City.

Kyle Anderson added 20 points, and Dillon Brooks had 17.

Bulls 105, Pistons 102

In Chicago, Zach LaVine scored 37 points and the Bulls beat Detroit on short notice.

The Bulls were scheduled to visit Charlotte, with the Pistons at Dallas. Those games got called off Tuesday by the NBA because of COVID-19 contact tracing concerns with the Hornets and power outages in Texas. The Bulls and Pistons were then scheduled to play each other, instead.

TRIBUNE SPORTS SCORES

NBA STANDINGS

EASTERN CONFERENCE

Atlantic	W	L	PCT	GB
Philadelphia	19	10	.655	0.0
Brooklyn	18	12	.600	1.5
Boston	14	14	.500	4.5
New York	14	16	.467	5.5
Toronto	13	15	.464	5.5
Central				
Milwaukee	16	12	.571	0.0
Indiana	15	14	.517	1.5
Chicago	12	15	.444	3.5
Cleveland	10	19	.345	6.5
Detroit	8	20	.286	8.0
Southeast				
Charlotte	13	15	.464	0.0
Atlanta	12	16	.429	1.0
Miami	11	17	.393	2.0
Orlando	11	18	.379	2.5
Washington	9	17	.346	3.0

WESTERN CONFERENCE

Pacific	W	L	PCT	GB
LA Lakers	22	7	.759	0.0
LA Clippers	21	9	.700	1.5
Phoenix	17	10	.630	4.0
Golden State	16	13	.552	6.0
Sacramento	12	15	.444	9.0
Southwest				
San Antonio	16	11	.593	0.0
Memphis	12	12	.500	2.5
Dallas	13	15	.464	3.5
New Orleans	12	16	.429	4.5
Houston	11	17	.393	5.5
Northwest				
Utah	24	5	.828	0.0
Portland	18	10	.643	5.5
Denver	15	13	.536	8.5
Oklahoma City	11	17	.393	12.5
Minnesota	7	22	.241	17.0

BY THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Steelers face cap issues with Roethlisberger

PENNSYLVANIA—Pittsburgh Steelers quarterback Ben Roethlisberger usually takes his time deciding whether he wants to keep playing every offseason. This time around, however, he may not have a team to which he can return.

The Steelers are facing a difficult cap situation, and Roethlisberger's $41 million cap hit is a big part of the issue. While one might normally assume the team will do whatever it takes to keep Roethlisberger around, that may not be the case, according to Steelers general manager Kevin Colbert.

Colbert said Wednesday the Steelers would "have to look at this situation."

Colbert added that "some adjustments have to be made" to bring Roethlisberger back.

That last part, in which Colbert mentioned "hopefully [Roethlisberger] can see that and feel the same way," suggests Colbert is hoping the quarterback is willing to restructure his deal to save the Steelers some cap space.

If Roethlisberger is unwilling to renegotiate his deal, that could lead to an awkward situation. The team can look to trade Roethlisberger to save on cap space, or it could cut Roethlisberger, which would help the cap situation.

The chances of that happening are small, however, as Roethlisberger said he was open to restructuring his deal. Roethlisberger actually took things a step further, saying he didn't care how much money he makes in 2021.

Colbert wasn't wrong to point out how Roethlisberger's cap issue impacts the team, but there's no reason for fans to freak out about Roethlisberger's future yet. It certainly sounds like he wants to make it work.

Among AFC North quarterbacks, Roethlisberger ranked dead last. The Baltimore Ravens Lamar Jackson was No. 7, Cleveland Browns Baker Mayfield was No. 11 and even Cincinnati Bengals rookie Joe Burrow ranked higher, checking in at No. 18.

This just adds to the case that the Steelers must address quarterback this offseason. Roethlisberger hasn't officially announced if he's planning to return after the retirement of center of Maurkice Pouncey but at this point even if Big Ben does come back for 2021, the Steelers must do more than Mason Rudolph and Dwayne Haskins as their future plans. *(AP/NBC)*

Tatis, Padres agree on $340M, 14-year deal

SAN DIEGO (AP)—Fernando Tatis Jr. has helped make baseball fun again in San Diego.

In return, the Padres have agreed to give the electrifying shortstop a $340 million, 14-year deal that could keep him with San Diego until he's 35 years old, according to two people familiar with the situation.

The two people spoke to The Associated Press on condition of anonymity Wednesday night because the deal hadn't been announced.

It will be the longest contract signed in MLB history. Giancarlo Stanton, now with the New York Yankees, signed a 13-year, $325 million deal with Miami in 2015. Bryce Harper signed a 13-year, $330 million deal with Philadelphia in 2019. The biggest deal by dollars remains Mike Trout's $426.5 million, 12-year contract signed with the Angels in 2019.

The 22-year-old Tatis has bloomed into a superstar in less than two full seasons with the Padres, hitting .301 with 39 home runs, 98 RBIs and 27 stolen bases in 143 games. He helped San Diego end a 13-year playoff drought in 2020 and win a wild-card series against the St. Louis Cardinals before the Padres were swept by the rival Los Angeles Dodgers in the NL Division Series.

AP

In this Sept. 7, 2020 file photo, San Diego Padres shortstop Fernando Tatis Jr. throws during a baseball game against the Colorado Rockies in San Diego.

He has quickly become one of the faces of baseball. He stands out because of his flair, easy smile, blond dreadlocks flowing from under his cap, a uniform dirtied by his hard-charging play and his dance moves in the dugout after hitting home runs.

Tatis was literally raised in the game at the feet of his father, who played 11 seasons in the big leagues. He has dared to challenge old-school norms—after hitting his second home run in an 11-9 win in Game 2 of the wild-card series against the Cardinals, he unleashed an emphatic bat flip. A photo of Tatis in that moment is on the cover of the video game MLB The Show '21.

In August, Tatis caused a stir when he hit a grand slam on a 3-0 count with the Padres leading the Texas Rangers by seven runs. The furor died down and the Padres became the first team in MLB history to hit grand slams in four straight games and five in six games.

Tatis comes from San Pedro de Macorís, Dominican Republic, also known as the Cradle of Shortstops.

San Diego promoted Tatis to the majors on opening day of 2019, forgoing the chance to delay his free agency by waiting a few weeks—a reality of the game experienced by other young stars like Kris Bryant with Chicago Cubs and Harper with the Washington Nationals.

Tatis has two years of service and would have been eligible for salary arbitration for the first time next offseason. While his deal sets a record for length, Tatis may have left dollars on the table if he continues on his star trajectory. His $24.29 million average salary will rank just 19th in the sport.

It's the first big payday for Tatis, who got a $700,000 signing bonus as an amateur from the White Sox in 2015, earned $555,555 as a rookie in 2019 and $219,185 in prorated pay last season.

Tatis played only 84 games in 2019 before being shut down by a stress reaction in his lower back. He still finished third in the NL Rookie of the Year balloting. He batted .277 with 17 homers and 45 RBIs in 59 games last year.

He's a threat on the basepaths and has made several spectacular plays at shortstop. He was named All-MLB First Team shortstop in 2020.

GCA

From Page 24

(2-7), and MHS 3 (1-8). The winners in the battle of lower seeded teams will move to the second round and challenge the Top 4 squads.

Girls division playoffs today

Meanwhile, the girls division playoff round will begin this afternoon.

Matches won't start until 5:30pm, as PSS will first hold the parade of teams at 5pm. The 12 squads are asked to be at the venue by 4:45pm. After the parade, Northern Mariana Islands Volleyball Association, which is helping PSS run the competition, will hold a brief ceremony at 5:15pm to honor its outgoing board members.

At 5:30pm, four teams will be on the sand courts to start the playoff matches. Mt. Carmel 1 will meet SIS 2, while the other game will be an all-Dolphins affair with MHS 2 squaring off against MHS 3.

The playoff matches will continue tomorrow with the finals tentatively set for 12pm and it will follow a best-of-three sets format with the first two sets a race-to-21 game, while the last and deciding (if needed) will be race to 15.

MHS 1, GCA 1 and 2, and SIS 1 are the early favorites going into this weekend's playoffs, as they finished in the Top 4 in the preliminary round. MHS 1 was undefeated and had a 9-0 record, while GCA 2 earned an 8-2 mark, and SIS 1 and GCA 1 posted 7-2 and 6-3 slates, respectively.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

A Saipan International School 2 player hits the sand after receiving a serve from Marianas High School 1, while his teammates look on during their game in the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan.

CNMI COVID-19 VACCINATION UPDATE

Before you register for vaccination, take our survey!
https://www.vaccinatecnmi.com/covid-19/survey/

WHO CAN REGISTER?

PHASE 1a
- Healthcare workers, high-risk first responders, homebound /bedbound patients, & Man Amko' (≥65 years).

PHASE 1b
- Persons 55 years of age and older.
- Workers part of CNMI infrastructure visit vaccinatecnmi.com for a list!

We are here
NO VACCINE
LIMITED SUPPLY PHASE 1
ADDITIONAL SUPPLY PHASE 2
BROAD SUPPLY PHASE 3

HOW DO I REGISTER FOR COVID-19 VACCINATION?
- Register **ONLINE** at **www.vaccinatecnmi.com**
- Register over the **PHONE** by calling **(670) 682-SHOT**/(7468)

CNMI COVID-19 VACCINATION SCHEDULE

2/15/2021-2/20/2021

SAIPAN

Monday 2/15 - 8am to 6pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
- Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 1/25

Tuesday 2/16 - 8am to 6pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
- Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 1/26

Wednesday 2/17 - 8am to 6pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
- Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 1/27

Thursday 2/18 - 8am to 6pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
- Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 1/28

Friday 2/19 - 8am to 3pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b
- Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 1/29

Saturday 2/20 - 8am to 1pm
- Dose 2: For those vaccinated on 01/30

NO VACCINATIONS ON SAIPAN FOR SUNDAY, 2/20

LOCATION: CHCC - MCATS tents located across from the Emergency Room.
PARKING: Parking lot is located across the CHCC campus on Navy Hill Road.

*Dose 1 vaccinations are based on availability and depends upon verification of phase status by CHCC. Go online to register at **vaccinatecnmi.com** or call the Vaccinate CNMI Call Center at **(670) 683-SHOT**/7468 to secure a vaccination spot.*

TINIAN

Monday 2/15 - 9am to 3pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 55+

Saturday 2/20 - 9am to 3pm
Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 55+

REGISTRATION WILL CLOSE 2/14 & 2/19 at 7pm

LOCATION: Tinian Health Center

ROTA

Saturday 2/20 - 8am to 3pm
- Dose 1: Available for Phase 1a & 1b

REGISTRATION WILL CLOSE 2/19 at 7pm

LOCATION: Rota Health Center

What to Bring

1. **Vaccination ID** (Located in confirmation email)
2. **Government Issued ID** (e.g, driver's license or passport)
3. **Employee ID** or latest paystub (Phase 1b only)
4. **Insurance Card** (If applicable)
5. DOSE 2 recipients must also bring their **Vaccination Record Card** (please make your appointment date even if you misplace your card)

VACCINATE CNMI CALL CENTER: **(670) 682-SHOT** / Mon-Sat 8am-8pm & Sunday 8am-1:30pm VACCINATE CNMI WEBSITE: vaccinatecnmi.com @cnmichcc

Osaka ends Serena's bid for historic win

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Saipan Tribune
Sports

Tatis, Padres agree on $340M, 14-year deal

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GCA finishes strong; MHS 1, Mt. Carmel 2 gain advantage

Star Wars-themed run set for May 4

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Northern Marianas Athletics and the Commonwealth Coalition of Private Schools Sports Association are organizing a running event inspired by Star Wars.

Dubbed as "May The 4th Be With You, CNMI," the running competition will offer both virtual and actual races with five different distances.

The Youngling Run will be a one-mile race and is only for runners in the U16 age group, while the Padawan Run will cover five kilometers. For the 10K distance, organizers will call the event the Jedi Knight Run, while the 21K is tagged as Jedi Master Run. The longest run in the competition will be the Jedi Grand Masters Run and will cover a distance of 42K. These five races will be virtual ones.

For the actual run, race director Ron Snyder and NMA will have the Mandalorian Run, which will have a 5K distance with the course starting and ending at the pavilion across the Oleai Sports Complex. The Mandalorian Run will be the highlight of the "May The 4th Be With You, CNMI," as runners have to be in Star Wars costume when they negotiate the course.

Snyder said all participants will receive a digital bib, a finisher's certificate, and a glow-in-the-dark medal.

For now, the "May The 4th Be With You, CNMI" is open to solo runners, but according to Snyder they are working on having a team event that they will call the Rebel Alliance Team Marathon.

To sign up, interested participants can go online via https://www.raceentry.com/.../may-the-4th-be.../view/2021. Registration fees in all events except the 5K for U16 runners is $10. Entry fees for the Youngling Run is only $5.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Edward Dela Cruz, Jr., left, and Galvin Deleon Guerrero in their Star Wars costume. Fans of the epic space opera media franchise are invited to participate in the "May The 4th Be With You, CNMI" running event.

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
roselyn_monroyo@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Grace Christian Academy won its remaining games in the preliminary round of the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League to join Marianas High School 1 and Mt. Carmel School 1 and 2 in the Top 4 rankings in the boys division.

The Eagles swept their final five games in the prelims last Saturday at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand courts to end up with an 8-1 record and place second in the team standings. GCA's lone loss in the prelims was against the No. 1 seed MCS 1 (9-0) during the opening week of the competition.

After the defeat, GCA's William Kim, Steven Balakrishna, Ryan Daproza, Anthony Deleon Guerrero, Christian Pamintuan, and Akira Ora downed MHS 3, 21-13; Saipan International School 2, 21-5; Agape Christian School 2, 21-12; MHS 1, 21-17; and MCS 2, 21-15 to gain one of the Top 4 spots heading into next week's playoffs.

The Eagles, MCS 1, MHS 1 (6-3), and MCS 2 (6-3) will get a bye in the first round of the double-elimination playoffs, leaving the No. 5 to No. 12 teams to compete in the Feb. 26 matches. Tinian and Rota were automatically ranked No. 5 and 6, respectively, as they did not play in the prelims, while SIS 2 (5-4) is at No. 7 and is followed by Agape 1 (4-5), SIS 1 (3-6), MHS 2 (2-7), Agape 2

See GCA on Page 23

ROSELYN B. MONROYO

Grace Christian Academy's Steven Balakrisha serves to Mt. Carmel School 1 during their game in the opening week of the 2020-2021 Public School System Interscholastic 4v4 Beach Volleyball League at the Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan sand courts.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

A Mt. Carmel School 2 player bends down for a return during their match against Saipan International School.